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Stories of the Saints



For Children.



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# STORIES OF THE SAINTS

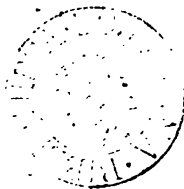
FOR CHILDREN.

By M. F. S.,

AUTHOR OF

"TOM'S CRUCIFIX, AND OTHER TALES," "CATHERINE  
HAMILTON," ETC.

*Second Series.*



LONDON :

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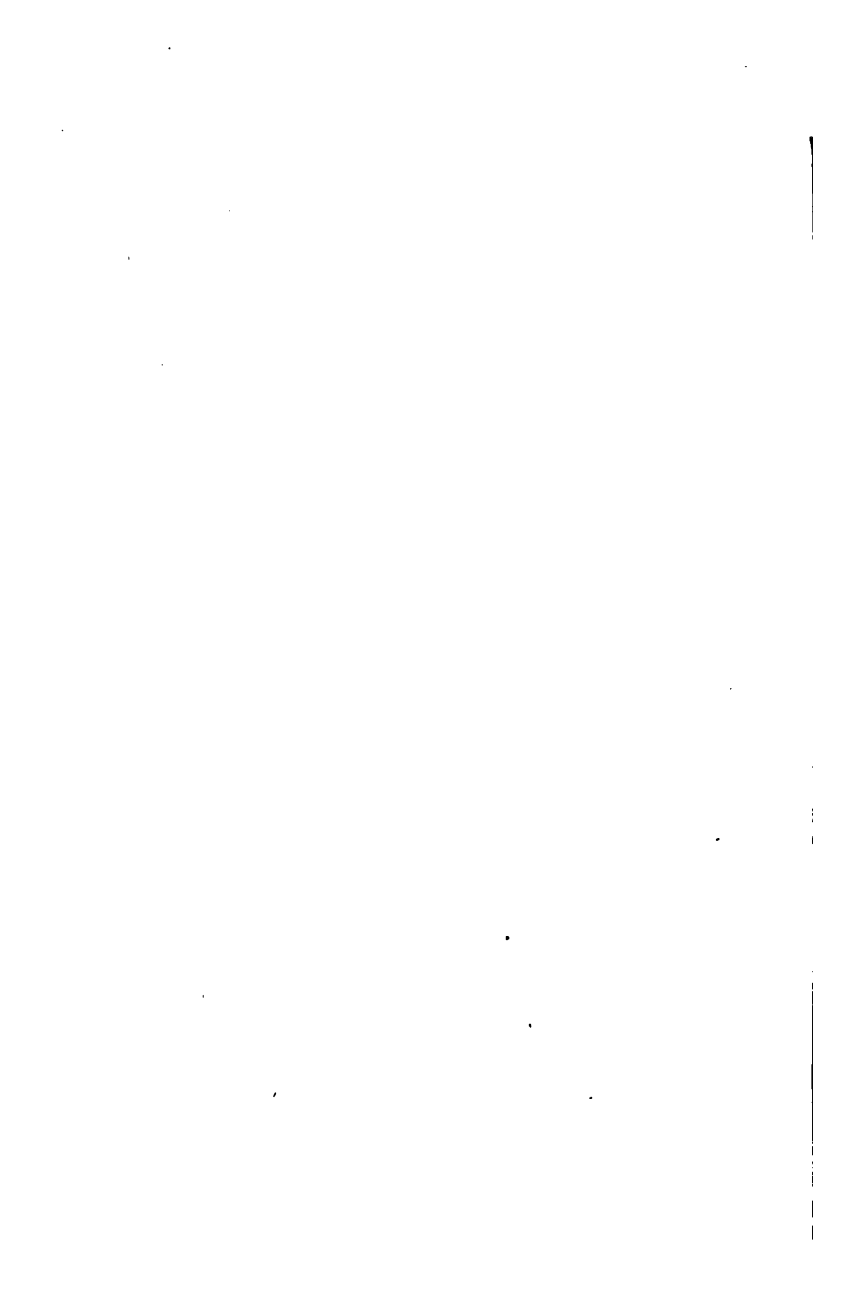
**Dedicated**

**TO**

**MARY IMMACULATE,**

**QUEEN OF ALL SAINTS, AND HELP OF CHRISTIANS.**







## INTRODUCTION.

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THE Second Volume of "Stories of the Saints" consists chiefly of those who have lived in the world, though not of it. All ranks of life—from priests and kings, to hermits and maidens—are represented; a variety is aimed at, and yet a certain likeness often suggests the succession of the stories. Being stories "for children" they are written as told, without any regard for chronology or for the initial letter of the Saint's name; one life naturally suggests another of a kindred spirit.

The story-teller cares not whether he draws his treasure of holiness from the confessors and virgins of the middle ages, or from the martyrs of the first; all serve to show forth the beauty of sanctity, and if other link is wanting, charity—the bond of the perfect—supplies the place of scientific method.

If children do not rise from the perusal of these stories with a very accurate knowledge of the dates of the Saints' lives and their place in church history, we trust that their hearts may be inflamed with the love of God, which has conformed all these His servants to the likeness of Christ.

E. L.

*Octave of All Saints,*  
1874.



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A



## S. George.

**E**NGLAND'S patron Saint was not born in this our country ; he never trod its soil ; he never brought the faith to our forefathers ; and yet God chose S. George to be especially our advocate in heaven, and to pray that this land may once more regain the crown of faith which has been lost to it so long. His name takes us back to a far-off time—to the reign of the Emperor Diocletian—when he was one of the bravest captains of the army, and afterwards gave up rank and renown to die as a glorious martyr for the Christian faith. These were terrible times for the lovers of Christ, and hard struggles had to be passed through by all who

owned His name, but S. George, the soldier-martyr, was triumphant, strong in the strength which was sent him from Heaven.

When, for the last time, he was summoned before the emperor, many promises of advancement were made if S. George would but deny God. "Sacrifice to our gods," said Diocletian, "and every suffering which you have endured shall be repaid by an honour."

The Saint replied : "Let us go to the temple that I may look upon your gods."

Diocletian rose directly ; he rejoiced in the hope of winning back to idolatry one whose services were so valuable in the defence of his country, and the people who crowded in shouted with joy, believing that their gods had won the victory. The temple was silent, every voice in that huge multitude was hushed, every eye was turned upon the brave soldier, who had borne so much suffering and now (as they thought) would renounce the faith he had professed and offer sacrifice to Apollo. S. George approached the statue, and stretch-

ing out his hand, said, "Are you God, and will you receive sacrifice from me?" and as he spoke he made the sacred sign of the cross.

Then the devil, speaking from within the statue, answered: "I am not God; there is but one God; He whom you preach. We fell from heaven and deceive men through hatred of God."

Then cried S. George: "How dare you stay here when I, who worship the true God, am present?"

As he spoke, a dreadful wailing seemed to come from every statue in that heathen temple, and falling to the ground, they were dashed in pieces. The tumult was great then, and the angry people demanded the life of the Saint. "Away with him!" they cried. "Rid us of this magician without delay."

There was one present who had concealed her belief in the true God, but she could do so no longer. This was the Empress Alexandra, who now advanced from the group around her,



and kneeling on the ground, renounced idolatry and boldly declared herself a Christian.

Long and agonizing tortures awaited S. George, but nothing daunted him. "There is none but God," he exclaimed at every fresh suffering, and thus he died, and many another martyr, when they remembered his courage, grew brave and strong, and the history of his victory over error, of his defence of the truth, was handed down from those old dark days to later times, and from it sprang the beautiful parable of "S. George and the Dragon," which is known to most of us; one that has a meaning which will apply to all places and all times.

In the province of Libya was a town where, in a gloomy marsh and forest, dwelt a dragon, so rapid in flight, so strong, that no sword of man could harm it. It was the terror of the country round, and yet whole armies failed even to wound it, and from the town the people were obliged to give themselves up one by one as prey for this terrible dragon, casting

lots to decide whose turn it might be. The king made himself one with his people, and the lot fell upon his own daughter, who was dear to every heart—so dear that the whole city wept as she went forth to die, dressed in her pure white robes, with a lily-crown upon her head.

She stood praying and waiting as the dragon came rushing towards her, with awful swiftness. The citizens watched from the walls, sobbing, shuddering, and sickening at the thought of her fate, when suddenly a soldier, clad in bright armour, with spear in hand, came spurring up from the east, and stood between the king's daughter and death. Terrible was the conflict; the dragon tore the soldier with his claws, lashed him with his tail, and yet the brave stranger was unconquered, and then, as the citizens held their breath with wonder, as the maiden prayed, and hoped, and feared by turns, the dragon went down, and the feet of the horse were on him, and the soldier's spear had found the place to

wound, and so the monster lay helpless ; and the fair princess rose, and casting her girdle round his neck, led him, subdued and harmless, as her prisoner, to the city gates. Thus runs the old poetical story, which ought to teach us so much. Who is the dragon but the evil spirit ? the father of wickedness, of heresy, and unbelief ; and S. George, dressed in the invincible armour of our holy Catholic faith, hurls the monster to the ground, tramples on it, shows its weakness, while the Church—the one pure bright daughter of the King—throws around it the girdle of purity and love, and leads it prisoner and captive to God.

During the Crusades, when thousands of Christian soldiers left all to die for truth and faith, it happened that at the siege of Jerusalem, when it seemed as if they could hold out no longer, an armed captain appeared on the Mount of Olives, waving his sword and encouraging them to proceed. At this sight the courage of the weary men revived, and crying that it was S. George who had come

from heaven to command them, they pressed boldly on against the enemy and entered the Holy City in triumph.

How this may be we cannot tell; it is not clearly known whether a heavenly leader was sent to the help of the Crusaders, but we may be sure that God, in making this Saint our special protector, intended us to be led by his spirit; that spirit of courage and strength which dares all for the cause of truth, and would count it a glorious privilege to give up greatness, honour, life itself, for the sake of Him Who shed for us His most precious Blood.





### S. Patrick.

**T**HOSE who have written the life of this Saint, have frequently differed as to the place of his birth, but the larger number of accounts say that he was born in a town of Brittany, about the year 372.

The infant was carried for baptism to a priest who was blind, and as there was no water ready, he took Patrick's little hand and made with it the sign of the cross upon the ground, and immediately a spring of water gushed forth. Afterwards the priest bathed his eyes in the miraculous water which had been sent by God for the baptism of the future Saint, and his sight was at once restored.

Several other wonderful things happened while he was still very young. The house where his nurse dwelt was once flooded with water so that even the fire was completely put out by it, and when little Patrick asked for food, he was told that it was impossible to cook any until a fire could be made.

The child went to a part of the house which the flood had not yet reached, and dipping his hand in some water, he let five drops fall from the tips of his fingers which were instantly changed into five sparks of fire, and it glowed and was not put out by any further rising of the water. Another time it was winter, and S. Patrick had been out playing with some little companions, and when he came in he brought with him an armful of sheets of ice. His nurse said it would have been far better to gather an armful of faggots to kindle a fire, for it happened to be a severe winter, and wood was difficult to get. Patrick replied that it was an easy matter to make fire prevail over water if God chose it should do so, and then throwing

ice upon the fire, which was dying out for want of wood, he made the sacred sign of the cross, and breathed over it. As he did this the bright flames burst forth, which gave light and warmth all round, and at the same time there seemed to be a radiance upon the young Saint's face, which was plainly seen by those who were present.

S. Patrick had a sister who was sent with him sometimes to look after the sheep, and one day the little girl fell, cutting her head by a blow, which appeared to have killed her; but her brother raised her, and made the sign of the cross upon the wound, which immediately healed up and she felt neither pain nor weakness. The scar from the blow remained always as a proof of the miracle which God had worked by the hand of Patrick. When he was about sixteen years old, the village where the Saint dwelt with his parents was attacked by a band of robbers, who carried away Patrick and sold him to a chieftain named Milcho,

who lived in that part of Ireland now called Antrim.

Here the lad had to tend his master's flocks, suffering many hardships, exposed to the cold of the night, or the heat of the day; but he prayed to God in his troubles, and the divine love burned so brightly in his heart, that neither snow or rain, frost or heat, seemed to harm him. For six years he served his master well and patiently, and doubtless, that part of his life was intended by God to prepare him for his future work among souls in that country to which he was afterwards to return, but the time for his escape had come, and this was made known to him in a vision, in which he was directed by a heavenly voice to fly from Milcho, and enter a ship which was about to sail.

Patrick obeyed directly, and was guided by God to the place from which he was to escape, and after three days' voyage reached the shore of a part of France, far distant from his native place. It was a wild and desert country then,



and as S. Patrick and the sailors journeyed through it, some of them were nearly fainting for want of food ; but at his prayer a herd of swine appeared upon the road, which gave them the means of getting meat to strengthen them before they travelled onward.

After many difficulties, Patrick reached the home of his parents again, and while he stayed quietly there God sent him a vision, in which he heard a number of Irish people calling him to come and dwell among them.

This vision decided Patrick in his wish to become a monk, so he began a course of study, spent some years in Italy, and having been ordained a priest went over to Ireland, where he landed in the county of Wicklow, in the year 432. But the people there had such hostile feelings toward the Saint that he could not stay very long, but set sail, and landed on the island of Holmpatrick, from whence they passed on to the coast of Down.

The holy man now began his mission to the Irish people, making wearisome journeys about

the island, in which he met with much persecution. Once when he was celebrating Mass a man who had dealings with the evil spirit upset the chalice with a long wand which he had got on purpose, but God's vengeance immediately overtook him, and the ground swallowed him up alive. In his travels through lonely parts of the island, Patrick's life was frequently in danger from robbers, and one time he would certainly have been killed but for the devotion of his servant who had gained the knowledge that some one was seeking to destroy the Saint's life.

So this faithful Odran asked leave to take S. Patrick's usual place in the rough carriage in which he was travelling, and thus when they reached the spot where the robber was concealed the servant was mistaken for the master, and the wicked man thrust a spear through his body, to the great grief of Patrick, who now understood the noble motive which had caused Odran to make such a request.

Another time he was surrounded by robbers,

who, however, only meant to play a trick upon the Saint, and so one of them pretended to be dead, while the rest begged Patrick to stop and say some prayers over his body. God had made the truth known to His servant Patrick, who did not on that account refuse their request, but to the horror of the robbers they found their companion was truly dead, and they surrounded the Saint, begging in earnest now for his prayers. Being filled with compassion for their distress, Patrick came back and prayed so earnestly to Heaven that he obtained the life of the dead man, who was afterwards baptized a Christian.

The success which Patrick met with as he journeyed about the country was great. All through the cold of winter he laboured to gain souls for God, and he passed his nights on a stone with a rock for his pillow, with only a wet sackcloth to cover him. Many miracles were wrought by him, for God gave him power to heal the sick, and to restore many dead to life. The Druid priests hated S. Patrick, be-

cause of the great work he was doing, and at one of their meetings at Tara, when the native chiefs were present, he went to meet them.

The hill of Tara, in the county of Meath, was the spot where at this time the Druids were going to kindle the sacred fire of Baal, but Patrick had already blessed the Paschal fire upon the plain in sight of the hill, and the flames shone forth so brightly that the Druids saw them. Then they were very much troubled, for they thought it a sign that the Saint would become more powerful than themselves, and they sought the king and told him that unless the fire was put out the man who had kindled it would rule over the kingdom. So the king with his horsemen started to attack Patrick's encampment, but a great terror seized them, and when they were close to the tent they dared not hurt him.

Then the king bade the Saint and his own Druids cast their books into the water to see which would come out unhurt and thus prove

itself true, but they refused, and at last a trial by fire was made, out of which one of Patrick's disciples came uninjured, and so he was allowed to go on working amongst the people of Ireland without any hindrance.

The life of this great Saint was full of miracles which we cannot tell in a short story like this; he founded monasteries and persuaded many men and women to serve God in the religious life; he destroyed idols wherever he went; he baptized people in every part of the island, and worked on year after year, counting no hardship too great, no sacrifice too dear for the souls of those for whom Jesus had shed His precious Blood on Calvary.

Every Lent, the Saint retired to a lonely cell on a mountain top in the county of Mayo, and there, by prayer and penance, he offered himself afresh to the service of God, and sought blessings for the country which was so dear to him. When S. Patrick was seized with his last illness, he lay suffering for seven days, one of his own disciples, who had been

made a bishop, came to attend on him, and when he had received the last Sacraments of the Church, he gave his blessing to those who surrounded him, and passed from the world to receive from God the reward of his life-long labour.





### S. Edward, King and Confessor.

**T** was a sorrowful time for England at that period when the little Prince Edward came into the world; towns were being laid waste by the savage Danes, churches were destroyed, monasteries and convents were pulled down, while holy men and women cried to God for mercy--beseeching Him to deliver their country from such great calamities.

To save his queen and children from the cruelty of the enemy, King Ethelred sent them from England to take refuge in Normandy, and there, in his uncle's house, Prince Edward spent the earliest years of his life. He was not like the other princes of his own age, with

whom he had to associate—their love was for pleasure, while Edward cared only for silence and solitude, for hours of prayer in the quiet churches, or the friendship of pious and holy monks who would talk with him of the love and goodness of God.

The venerable Brithwold, Bishop of Winchester, had gone to Glastonbury for refuge, and during his stay there, he beheld one night in a dream, the apostle S. Peter, before whom Edward appeared to be standing listening to his counsels. The bishop, with great humility, begged that this vision might be explained to him, and S. Peter replied that God would answer the prayers of the afflicted people, and that He had chosen Edward as the means of bringing blessings upon England.

When Canute died, the kingdom was freed from the oppression of the Danes, and then the English asked Edward to return to his own country from which he had been so long an exile, and in the year 1043, he was crowned king at Winchester.



There was great rejoicing throughout the nation then—churches and monasteries were restored, and religion flourished once more under the government of the wise and good sovereign whose life was so devout and simple. He was kind to all his people, but if he favoured any it was the poor, the orphans, and the sorrowful; and he had a great contempt for wealth. Once it happened that when the king was resting in his own room, his chamberlain brought in a large sum of money, and put it in a chest which he was accustomed to use as a treasury. But he went away, forgetting to close the lid, and one of the king's servants noticed this, and watching an opportunity, went quietly to the chest, and managed to take from it a quantity of money. He did not know that Edward was watching him, so he returned a second time for more; but the third time the king exclaimed, "My good fellow, you are unreasonable. Take what you have already and begone, for if Hugoline, the chamberlain, catches you he will not leave you a penny."

The man flew away greatly terrified, and he had only just escaped when the chamberlain came back, who soon discovered the robbery, and uttered such exclamations of fear and grief that Edward asked what troubled him, saying (when Hugoline told the loss), "Hold thy peace, and be content. Perchance he that took it had greater need than we."

This good king married Edith, the daughter of Godwyn, Earl of Kent, who was a very pious and holy lady, and they agreed to belong entirely to God, spending their lives for His service, and loving each other only in Him.

About this time the Queen Emma, who was Edward's mother, was falsely accused of great crimes, which caused much distress to the king, and he sought the advice of the archbishop, who assembled a council at Winchester to inquire into these terrible reports. In those old times people who were suspected of great sins were sometimes made to submit to some public trial, which should prove their innocence

or guilt; and therefore Emma was sentenced to pass, barefooted, over hot burning irons, and if she could bear this the people would be forced to see that it was by the help of Almighty God, who would only assist her if she had been wrongfully accused.

A day was fixed for this scene to take place in S. Swithen's church, at Winchester, and all the night before poor Queen Emma knelt there, entreating God to come to her help and prove that she had not committed such grievous sins against Him. Next day, in the presence of her son, King Edward, and a great number of people, she was led in between two bishops, dressed in coarse garments of penance and with her eyes raised to heaven, she passed over nine red-hot ploughshares barefooted, yet she never felt the least pain and did not even know her trial was over and her innocence proved until she looked back and saw the burning irons behind her. Then she fell on her knees and thanked God for His protection, and Edward cast himself at her feet, asking

her to pardon him for having allowed her to endure this public trial, and to prove his regret, he begged to be struck with a rod of iron by her hand and the hands of the bishops who were present.

During the Holy Sacrifice, Edward one day was noticed to smile in a manner which led those who saw him to suppose that something very unusual had happened, and upon being afterwards questioned, he said that God had made known to him that the Danes had been gathering an army together to come and make war upon England, but that as the wicked king was stepping on board the ship which was to bring him, his foot slipped, and falling into the sea, he was immediately drowned.

This sudden death was found to be quite true, and had happened at the moment it was made known to Edward.

This reminded the Saint that he had made a vow of going on a pilgrimage to Rome, so he summoned his nobles together, telling them of his purpose of thus giving thanks to Almighty

God, and bade them determine as to the manner in which the kingdom should be governed during his absence.

The assembly were so much distressed, and begged so earnestly of Edward not to leave them, that he hardly knew what was best to do, so he asked the Pope to decide for him, whether to keep his vow or listen to the entreaties of his people. In reply, the Pope bade Edward give up his desire which might perhaps bring danger to his people, and he was therefore set free from his vow by the authority of the Church, according to the power given it by God, while a part of the money which had been collected for the journey was to be distributed amongst the poor, and with the remainder an old monastery was to be repaired, or a new one built in honour of S. Peter.

There was a very holy man living in England, in a cave under ground, at that time, and to him there was granted a vision of the great apostle, who made known to him that the place upon which the new monastery must be built,

was a spot which is now the site of Westminster Abbey. The old man wrote to King Edward and related what he had heard, and the Saint immediately set about rebuilding and restoring the ruined monastery which S. Peter had once consecrated, and which stood on the place he had spoken of to the good old man in his vision.

God was pleased to show His love and favour towards the good king by many public signs. A poor Irishman, who had long been lame, and suffering great agony, crept one day to the king's palace and told the chamberlain that S. Peter had promised to cure him if Edward would carry him upon his back to the church. When the king heard this he ordered the cripple to be brought to him, and taking him upon his shoulders he went on his way. Some of the bystanders ridiculed the Saint, others besought him to put down a creature so covered with wounds and dirt, but the king persisted in carrying him into the church, where he offered this sacrifice to God, and the man

walked away without assistance, being perfectly cured.

On one occasion Jesus appeared upon the altar of S. Peter's church during holy Mass, and gave the good king his benediction. Another time a blind man regained his sight by washing his face in the water with which S. Edward had washed his hands, and afterwards others were miraculously cured by the king's touch and blessing.

The Saint had a particular devotion to S. John the Evangelist, and would never refuse anything asked in S. John's name. A poor pilgrim begged alms from him once in the name of God and S. John, and the king having nothing ready, immediately gave him a very valuable ring off his own finger; some time later, two Englishmen were on pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, and lost their way, upon which a venerable old man appeared to them and guided them in safety to a town. When they parted, he told the pilgrims that he was S. John the Apostle, and bade them

bear to the king this ring, which he had received as alms when he was disguised as a poor man. He bade them also inform Edward that the time of his death drew near, and that in six months he himself would summon him from the world.

The pilgrims faithfully told the king what had happened, giving up the ring, which was afterwards kept as a holy relic by which many miracles were wrought. As it had been predicted, the good King Edward died at the appointed time, after a useful and holy reign, and was buried in the church of S. Peter, now known as Westminster Abbey. Many miracles have been worked at this tomb, and although in the present time the sacred spot has fallen into the hands of heretics, the pious example of S. Edward still lives in the memory of the Catholic Church, which reverences his virtues, and commemorates the graces and honours bestowed upon him by Almighty God, in the yearly festival which is fixed upon the 13th October, offering to Heaven the following prayer:



“O God, who hast crowned the blessed King Edward, Thy confessor, with a diadem of glory, grant that we may honour him in such a manner upon earth as to hereafter reign with him in heaven, through Christ our Lord.”  
Amen.





### S. Margaret of Scotland.



THE life of Margaret, who afterwards became the Queen and Saint of Scotland, takes us back to the days when her grandfather, Edmund Ironsides, was murdered, and his son (her father) sent away to find shelter at the court of the King of Hungary. So, though of English birth, the little Margaret passed her earliest years in exile ; fortunately she was in a country where the king taught by his own example the practice of Christian virtues and a great devotion to the Blessed Mother of God. At about ten years of age, Margaret, with her father and his family, returned to her own country, where all that was good was still

before her in the lives of S. Edward the Confessor and his Queen Edith. But dark days were coming; changes occurred in England, and Edward's death placed the whole land in sorrow; Edgar, the brother of Margaret, was the rightful heir to the crown, but he was no match for the rivals, Harold and William, and when the attempt to put forward his claim had failed, he prepared immediately to return to Hungary, with his mother and sister.

But God had other designs for them, and during their short sea-voyage they were assailed by a storm, which drove them from their course and ship-wrecked them upon the coast of Scotland.

Malcolm was reigning there, and he hastened to receive the royal fugitives with every mark of welcome and respect, and about a year afterwards he had learned to admire the beauty and piety of Margaret so much, that he asked her to be his queen.

The girl's hopes had all been set upon a higher love than his; safely in her heart a

desire had been hidden which grew stronger every hour, and this was, that, like her sister Christina, she might receive the religious habit and become a spouse of Christ. So when Edgar and her mother sought her with congratulations, and exclaimed, "Health to the future Queen of Scotland," Margaret trembled and turned pale, as she murmured out, "I had aspired to be the spouse of Christ."

Then her brother pleaded with her for himself, for his mother; showing her that a refusal to become Malcolm's queen would force them to leave that land and once more wander as exiles to a foreign shore.

Margaret hesitated, and begged a few days' delay, so that she might ask guidance from God; hard as it would be to enter upon a state she had never desired, if *He* called her she was ready to obey.

Long hours she knelt before her crucifix—it spoke to her of sacrifice. "I am not worthy," was the cry of her humble heart, and as she prayed, God gave her light to know that He

pointed to the state of marriage and the throne of a queen as the way in which she was to sanctify herself; then at the foot of the cross she laid down all her desires, all her regrets, and rose up strengthened to do the Divine Will.

There was joy throughout Scotland when Margaret was proclaimed queen; but the universal homage never disturbed the humility of her heart; her gentle voice and smile bound her people more closely to her, and she was content to offer herself, her tears, her prayers as a sacrifice for them to God.

Margaret's first care was to choose a wise director for the assistance of her soul, and under his eye she arranged her daily exercises of piety and devotion. Each morning saw her at one Mass, if not two or three, and no day passed without her reading in the Holy Gospels. Although her health was weak, she did not find this a reason for dispensations from fasting and other penances; she also waited upon the poor and sick, and would sell her own

jewels if she had not sufficient money to assist them.

The Saint devoted a great many hours to the work of the altar, and as she sat amidst her ladies engaged in rich embroidery, her thoughts were with God and those who suffered for His sake—the poor prisoners without air, or light, or nourishment, whom she longed to restore to liberty.

Malcolm was very proud of his gentle queen, and by her influence he was persuaded to desire peace, and while defending his rights, never to let a desire for vengeance enter his heart, and the rough king often asked her to pray that God would give him those graces which would assist him to be a good ruler over his subjects.

At that time a great many pilgrims resorted to S. Andrews, although they suffered many hardships in going and returning, so the thoughtful Queen had houses built upon the shores of the Frith of Forth, where their wants were provided for at her expense, and ferry-

boats were in readiness to take them to the shrine of the apostle.

One thing which gave great pain to Margaret was the general neglect of Sundays and the indifference even towards Easter Communion ; the fast of Lent, also, instead of beginning on Ash Wednesday, was delayed until the Sunday after, and all these evils were put right by the queen's gentle influence and bright example. She encouraged the habit of saying grace at meals by beginning the custom of drinking to the health of all those who had given God thanks for His temporal mercies, and for many many years after her death this habit lived, and was called "The grace-drink " or "S. Margaret's blessing."

It pleased God to give the good Scottish queen the care of eight children to bring up in His love and fear, and we may be sure from their earliest babyhood she prayed much for grace to train them aright. Very little has been told of her life amongst this little family, excepting that she always taught them strict

habits of obedience and self-denial, and insisted upon them yielding one to another. The later history of these children shows the happy result of the guidance of this holy mother, for those who died young and those who lived to a more mature age left behind them beloved and honoured names for piety and charity.

For nearly twenty-five years Queen Margaret's life brought blessings upon Scotland, and it was perhaps the happiest time she had known amidst the changes which had befallen her, but it was God's purpose that the close of her days should be in sorrow and storm. She had a foreshadowing of approaching death, and would at times speak of it to her confessor, begging him never to forget to offer Masses for her soul, and especially commending her children to his care, desiring him to reprove them if he saw them falling into any faults or neglecting their souls. The monk gave her his promise and then they parted, never in this world to meet again.

War was now engaging the English and the



Scots, and four days before she died, Margaret was unusually sad and spoke to her attendants of some great loss which had overtaken the country. At the time they did not particularly heed her words, but they were struck by them a day or two afterwards, when news came that King Malcolm had been slain.

On the last day of her life the dying queen seemed a little better, and was carried to her oratory to hear Mass and receive Holy Communion, but she became worse directly after, and was laid once more in bed.

Every one could see that her end was approaching. The priests who were there commended her soul to Christ and placed the cross in her hands, which she kissed again and again, repeating the Psalm "Miserere."

At this moment her son Edgar came into the room, on his arrival from the scene of war, and the queen, who had not heard of her husband's death, asked immediately for news of him and Edward. The young prince hesitated to answer her, but as she kept bidding him

conceal nothing, he told her that both his father and brother had fallen in battle four days before.

The sweet face was perhaps a little paler, but her voice was firm and her eyes tearless as she gave thanks to God for allowing her to suffer, even in her last moments, and besought Him to let it purify her soul from her sin and imperfections, and then, with half-audible prayers upon her lips, she died, at the age of forty-six, upon the 16th of November, 1093, and her body was laid to rest near the altar of the church she had herself founded at Dunfermline.

About thirty years later, the belief that Margaret was a Saint in heaven began to grow in those hearts which revered her name, but it was not until 1251 that Pope Innocent IV. proclaimed her canonized.

Then a grand procession, such as Scotland had never seen, went to her tomb, and opening it, placed her sacred body in a chest of silver enriched with jewels. Still there are me-

morials of the Sainted Queen of Scotland in places which bear her name. A little apart from the city of Edinburgh is a holy well, called S. Margaret's, and visitors to the castle will find the Chapel of S. Margaret, which many believe to be the oratory where she received that last Communion before she entered her heavenly home, after the days of exile and sorrow on earth were ended.





### S. Cuthbert.



HERE is an island off the coast of Northumberland, nearly opposite Berwick, where the holy Saint Cuthbert spent some years of his life—it was then called Lindisfarne, but later it was given the name of Holy Island, by which we know it in the present time. He was born in Northumbria, not far from the monastery of Mailros, somewhere about the year 637, and when he was eight years of age, it appears that he was left an orphan.

As a little boy, he used to watch sheep on the mountains near Mailros, and there he saw so much of the holy life of the monks, that he used, in his childish way, to try and imitate

them, watching and praying even during the night-time.

However, Cuthbert was very fond of play and boyish sports, and often when others were tired out, he was still ready to jump, run, or wrestle against anybody, and indeed, he used to boast that he could surpass all of his own age, and many of those who were bigger and older. The venerable S. Bede, who has written so much of the life of Cuthbert, tells that one day he, with a number of boys, was amusing himself in a field, when a little fellow, not above three years old, ran to him and begged him not to indulge in idle amusement, but to make the best of the powers of mind which God had given him. Cuthbert laughed scornfully, and the child threw himself on the ground crying so bitterly, that the rest of the lads gathered round, asking what was the matter ; then turning again to Cuthbert, who was trying to comfort him, he said : " O holy Cuthbert, priest and bishop, why do you play among children when God has appointed you to teach

virtue to those who are older than yourself?"

The words of this little boy made a great impression upon the elder lad. They could not have come from the lips of one so young, unless inspired by the Holy Ghost; so caressing the child, and wiping away his tears, Cuthbert went home to think, and from that time a great change passed over him.

When he was older, a vision of the holy Bishop Aidan, when he was passing from earth, was given to the Saint, who resolved then to enter a monastery. It happened one night, when he was tending sheep on some distant mountains, his companions were sleeping while he was engaged in prayer; suddenly a long streak of light broke through the darkness of the sky, and in the midst of it a company of angels came down upon the earth, and receiving a spirit of great brightness, passed back swiftly to heaven. Cuthbert marvelled very much at this, and it roused him to such a desire for eternal life in God's presence, that he

awoke his companions and told them what he had seen, adding, that he believed it was the soul of some very holy bishop, which had been taken to the happiness of heaven.

When morning came, he found that Aidan, the bishop of the church of Lindisfarne, had died at the very moment of his vision, and giving up the sheep to their owners, he immediately turned all his thoughts to the life of a monk.

Choosing, therefore, to seek an entrance in the abbey of Mailros, because of the great piety of one of the priests there, Cuthbert started on his way and was received by this holy prior, who chanced to be standing at the monastery door when he entered and exclaimed, "Behold a servant of the Lord."

Cuthbert soon gave signs of his future sanctity, fulfilling his duties with great zeal and observing the most strict rule over himself, and after a few years' training in the life of a monk he was raised to the office of guest-master at a monastery in Ripon. God granted

him a miracle at this time, for the purpose of exciting in his heart a still greater charity towards the strangers whom it was his duty to receive.

One winter morning, when the snow lay thickly on the ground, one of God's angels appeared to him in the form of a grave elderly man, whom Cuthbert greeted kindly, washing his hands and feet, as the custom was for those who had travelled far. At first he could not prevail upon his guest to eat, but at length he consented, and Cuthbert prepared the table, setting upon it the best food he had to offer. It chanced that he had no bread at hand, so putting on the table some crumbs of blessed bread, he hastened to seek more, but finding that the loaves were still baking in the oven of the monastery, he returned to his guest, and to his surprise found him gone without even a print of footsteps appearing upon the snow. Then Cuthbert felt sure it was an angel whom he had entertained, and as he removed the table to an inner room he found three hot loaves



of a very sweet bread as a proof from God that a heavenly guest had sought the hospitality of the monastery.

Before long the monks were driven away from their home at Ripon, and Cuthbert returned to Mailros, rejoicing to be once more in the company of Boisil. Soon after, he was attacked by a disease then raging in Britain, which was thought to be the yellow plague, and his brothers spent a whole night in praying that so holy a life might be spared to them. Cuthbert knew nothing about this, but in the morning they told him what they had asked of God, upon which he exclaimed, "Why then am I lying here? it is not possible that God should have neglected your prayers; give me my stick and shoes."

He got out of bed directly, and tried to walk, leaning on his stick, and his strength came gradually back, so that he was soon restored to health; but the holy Boisil, who had also been attacked by the disease, did not recover. Before he died, he foretold many things which

should happen to Cuthbert, amongst others that he should become a bishop.

The office of Prior of Mailros, which had been filled by Boisil, was given after his death to Cuthbert, who, imitating his holy friend, travelled about the country instructing the ignorant, and correcting error. He was so skilful in teaching, and had so clear a knowledge of the hearts of men, that no one ventured to hide sins from him, often openly confessing their guilt. During his visits to these villages among the mountains, Cuthbert would take the time when all were sleeping for his own prayer and penance, and a monk, who one night secretly followed him, observed the holy prior go down to the sea and walk into it until the water reached his neck, and then begin the praises of God until dawn, when he came out of the water and knelt in prayer again.

During the years he dwelt at Mailros, several miracles are known to have been worked by Cuthbert. He had gone with two of his monks by sea to a lonely place on the banks of the

River Nith, when a violent storm came on and kept them there from the day succeeding Christmas-day till the Epiphany, exposed both to cold and hunger, but by his prayers food was given to them, and he was able to foretell the coming of a fair wind.

Another time when the house of a woman who had been his nurse was in danger of being destroyed by fire, he knelt down on the ground before the door and prayed, and a strong wind immediately rose in the west, which turned the flames another way and saved the dwelling.

Cuthbert was next removed to the monastery upon the island of Lindisfarne, where he led a life of prayer and activity similar to his custom during his stay at Mailros, ruling his monks wisely within the walls of their holy house, giving many hours to visiting the neighbouring people, converting many to God by his example and earnest words. Here he stayed twelve years, at the end of which he longed for a more retired life, and obtained permission

from his abbot to go to a little island called Farne, which was a solitary rock, removed just a short distance from Lindisfarne. It was a barren spot, without fruit, water, or trees, but by the prayers of Cuthbert corn sprang out of the hard earth, and water was miraculously caused to gush out of the rock.

The hermit set to work to form a cell for himself, the wall of which was formed of rough stones and turf (stones so heavy that angel hands helped Cuthbert to raise them and place them on the wall) and there he began to lead his solitary life, visited at rare intervals by his brethren of Lindisfarne. Many sea-birds came to the island, building their nests by the Saint's cell, and of these, the eider-ducks were his especial favourites, and he taught them while sitting upon their nests not to fly away when he came near or to fear his touch.

Many followed him to his solitude to confess their sins, or to tell him their temptations and trials, and never went away unconsolated or unaided. Nine years after he had gone to this

island Cuthbert was made bishop, and forced to leave his cell ; but after fulfilling the duties of that position for two years he resigned it, and went back to Farne, because he knew his death was approaching, and he wished to prepare especially for it by solitude and prayer. It was Christmas-time when he left Lindisfarne, to the great sorrow of his monks, who stood round mournfully as he entered the boat. " Tell me, reverend bishop, when we may hope for your return," exclaimed one, to whom he answered, " When you bring my body back here."

During the short time he lived in his little rocky retreat, a party of the monks went one day to see him, and when he had talked with them and given them his blessing, he returned to his cell, bidding them take some food he had got ready. They refused to touch it, saying they had refreshments with them, but suddenly a storm rose which hindered their return to Lindisfarne, and for seven days they were kept on the little island.

On the seventh day the holy Cuthbert saw the food still untouched, and reproving them for disobedience, he ordered them at once to cook and eat it. As soon as they began to do so, the wind went down and the storm ceased, and after they had finished their meal, they went safely back to their monastery, having learned the consequences of disobeying even the least request of so holy a servant of God.

About two months after his return to Farne, Cuthbert was seized with sudden illness, and the abbot and others went to visit him, to whom he explained all that he desired as to his burial, which he wished to be there in Farne, by his oratory.

When the news was taken to the monastery that the bishop was dying, it caused the greatest distress, especially when they heard that he desired to be buried on his own island, and they sent some of the brethren to entreat that they might possess his body in the church of Lindisfarne, and after some hesitation he consented, in order that they might have the

opportunity of visiting his tomb. Up to his last day upon earth, the holy bishop prayed constantly, and addressed words of comfort and spiritual help to those who assisted him, and then, after receiving the Sacraments, he gave up his soul into the hands of God, Who received him among the blessed in heaven.

The abbot, Herefrid, put up a signal to let the monks of Lindisfarne know that their bishop had expired, and shortly after they conveyed his body to their monastery, and many miracles were worked at the tomb. Towards the close of the eighth century a Danish fleet appeared off the coast, and a troubled time began for the church of Lindisfarne; their altars were robbed, many of the monks were slaughtered or drowned in the sea, and those who were spared had to escape with the sacred relics of their bishop, Cuthbert.

They bore the coffin to the sea-shore, and there resolved to await a change of tide, but suddenly the waves rolled back and made a dry path by which they safely reached the

opposite coast. For seven years the remains of Cuthbert were carried about from place to place for safety, and there are few spots in the North of England which were not visited and blessed by them, upon which in later times chapels and churches rose up, bearing his name, and then the chief resting-place for the holy relics was found at Durham, and a handsome cathedral was built over them.

In the sixteenth century, the body of S. Cuthbert was found still incorrupt, and though its present resting-place is a secret, there is a tradition that when England again becomes Catholic it will be made known in God's mercy, and given back to the keeping of those who will raise a worthy shrine for the honoured relics of the Saint of Northumbria.







### S. Dunstan.

**T**HIS Saint was born in Glastonbury, and although the exact date is not known, it was probably before the year 940 that he came into the world and was offered by his parents to God at the altar of the Blessed Virgin.

When he was old enough, some Irish monks, who had come to dwell in the deserted abbey, began to instruct the little boy, and thus he learned the doctrine of the Christian faith, and many other branches of study, in all of which he took great delight.

Dunstan was more talented than any of his young companions who were trained by the monks of Glastonbury, and when he was taken

to the court of his uncle, King Athelstan, he received so much praise and admiration that some of the courtiers grew envious, and made up many false and malicious tales about him. This was partly the cause of Dunstan leaving the king, and going to the house of the Bishop of Winchester, who was also a relative, and in this quiet time he learned to understand how little worth are all earthly honours, and began to plan out a retired and holy life for the rest of his years. In order that he might be drawn nearer to God, he was attacked by a severe illness which kept him weak for a long time, and on that sick bed Dunstan made a generous offering of himself to the divine service. When he had quite recovered, he put himself into the hands of the bishop to be guided to do the Will of God, and the habit of a monk was given to him, and he was sent to the old church at Glastonbury, where he had been baptized, and where he had spent his happy childhood under the learned Irish monks.

All the skill in music, in painting, and en-

graving, which he had been famous for at the court of Athelstan, were not useless now—Dunstan could devote them to the service of the Church, and so he applied himself to the task of copying the sacred Scriptures, beautifying the pages with painted scenes from the Old and New Testament. He could also work the sacred vessels for the altar in precious metals, and many of these were sent by him to some priests in distant parts, who had nothing so rich or costly for the service of the Church. Carving in wood, moulding in wax and clay, engraving, and music were all talents which Dunstan possessed and made use of, and thus he passed his time in the monastery of Glastonbury until King Athelstan died.

When Edmund came to the throne, he had a palace only a few miles from Glastonbury, and this drew him to pay frequent visits to the old abbey church, where he heard of Dunstan, and finding how holy and learned he was, gave him the office of his chief counsellor, presenting him with the property of Glastonbury.

Then the good monk collected others together and formed a community, to whom he gave the Benedictine rule, and thus he took steps to bring back the schools which had been destroyed in England.

For a long time S. Dunstan was held in honour and esteem, but when Edwy became king, he took a great dislike to the holy man because he had the courage to reprove him for doing wrong, and he had such a spite against him that the Saint was forced to escape for safety to Flanders, and his monks were scattered by order of the bad monarch. But a change came for England, and when Edgar was placed upon the throne, Dunstan was recalled to the position he had held before, and shortly afterwards he was made archbishop. Monasteries and abbeys began to flourish then, and more than forty were founded or restored; he also did much good in the parishes, seeing that the children were instructed in the catechism, and taught to sing in church, besides understanding some useful trade, by which they

could, when older, support themselves. King Edgar assisted Dunstan in carrying out all these useful works, and held him in great esteem, but unfortunately he yielded to temptation, and committed a great sin. King though he was, the archbishop went to him and reproved him severely for what he had done, and Edgar was so sorry that he burst into tears, and said he would accept any penance which was given him. Penances were long and hard in those days, and S. Dunstan put one upon him which was to last seven years, in which time he was never to wear his crown; he had to give away large alms to the poor, and to fast twice a week, and he was also to found a convent for a community of nuns. Edgar faithfully performed his penance, and when the seven years were over a great assembly of lords and bishops met, and in the presence of them all, Dunstan put the crown upon the king's head once more and bade him show an example of piety and virtue to his people.

It would be a mistake to think from this that the Saint was harsh and severe—he hated sin because God hates it, and he never forgot that he had received his power from Heaven for the purpose of punishing what was wrong in those of whom he had the care, but no one was more tender and loving-hearted to the poor and suffering than this good archbishop, who employed all his wealth to relieve their wants.

His life was so busy in ruling the monasteries and churches, in preaching, and visiting the schools, that we can hardly understand how he found so much time to pray and meditate on spiritual things ; but if the day was busy, he shortened his time for rest, and gave hours of the night to communion with God.

In the year 988, S. Dunstan became very feeble, and the feast of the Ascension that year was the last time his voice was heard in the cathedral. That day he preached even more fervently than usual, feeling that his death was near, and concluded his Mass amidst the tears

of all who were present. Later in the day, he went to the church and pointed out the spot where he wished to be buried, and after that he never left his room, but died calmly and gladly upon the 19th of May, after being an archbishop twenty-six years.

In S. Dunstan we have no triumphant martyr dying for Christ, but we see in him a holy monk, priest, and bishop, who gave his life to the Church and to God—his power, his talents, his wealth, were only valuable to him as far as they were useful for the divine glory—he had learned by prayer how to be rich in possession, yet poor in spirit, and thus won the love and blessing of God by his faithfulness in every duty of his state. He was buried according to his desire, in his own church, but some part of his relics were taken to Glastonbury, where he had been offered in his infancy to God and the Blessed Virgin.



### S. Gilbert of Sempringham.

**A**BOUT the close of the reign of William the Conqueror, Sir Joceline of Sempringham had a little son born to him, who was so small and pale and sickly, that no one thought he would grow up to manhood. But it was evident that God had chosen, in His divine providence, that the little Gilbert should be thus weakly, for it led his father to decide that he should give his time to study, as he had evidently none of the qualities of mind or body to fit him for a soldier. Those were days in which courage and strength were prized more than piety and virtue, and the poor little delicate boy was disliked and despised so much that no one took any notice of



him, and even the servants of his father's household could scarcely bear to have him at their table. For a long time, Gilbert disliked books and learning, but at last he had a sudden love for gaining knowledge, which caused his parents to send him to Paris for education. There is not a great deal known of his life there, but we hear that his diligence made up for all the carelessness of his first years. Although Sir Joceline was rich, he was too much vexed at having such a weak son to care much how he was provided for. The great strong baron had hoped that Gilbert would be fond of sports and full of enterprise; a child of whom he might be proud; but God had willed that he should do a work in the Church, and pass through a training of contempt, poverty, and humiliation, so that he might offer himself as a true sacrifice to the Lord.

When Gilbert came back from Paris, he had obtained the degree of master, with permission to teach, so he returned to his old home, and opened a school there. In those times, a school-

master was treated with much respect, and was next in importance to a priest, so that he was no longer despised as he had been, and from all parts of the country children were put under his charge. Now that Sir Joceline saw his son honourably employed, he supported him out of his own wealth, and this gave him more influence over them than he would have had if he had remained poor; but he still tried to lead a simple life, and trained his pupils to fixed times of study, silence, and prayer, as if they had been in a monastery.

After a time, the Bishop of Lincoln appointed Gilbert to be the rector of two parishes—Sempringham and Tirington. He was not then in holy orders, so that he obtained a chaplain to serve the Church, to whom he submitted himself in everything, making him his confessor and guide. Gilbert was now a very great deal happier than he had been in his father's hall—he taught the rough peasants the holy mysteries of their faith, and especially trained them to great reverence for the

Church, where God humbled Himself to dwell.

However, Gilbert was not left in this quiet life, for the Bishop of Lincoln summoned him to reside in his household, and there, in the midst of grandeur, he contrived to fast and pray, and practise a life of penance. It was not long before the dignity of the priesthood was given to Gilbert, and then he longed more than ever to be away from Alexander's palace, amongst the poor whom he had sought in Sempringham. About the year 1130, he left the bishop, and went back to his own parish, where he was welcomed with the greatest joy; his father and mother were dead, and their riches were his now; but he had long made up his mind to give up everything for the sake of Christ, and his first thought was to build a monastery in Sempringham. However, it became plain that God willed him to establish a house there for religious women, and so a convent was raised, and the bishop blessed it, and seven maidens gave themselves to God and prayed to

Him there in the night, when all the world was at rest, for a blessing upon the land which was so full of sin. The number soon increased, and lay-sisters were added to the community, who assisted the nuns in the brewing and baking, the spinning and washing; and next, Gilbert founded a house for lay-brothers, who could plough and dig, and manage the cow-houses, and barns, and thus his plan was complete, and these women in their cloister, and these poor men in their simple life of industry, were alike serving and glorifying God.

Alarms of war were sounding all about them, abbeys and monasteries were burned and ruined throughout England, but the convent of Sempringham was in peace, and the Bishop of Lincoln was so comforted by its prosperity and holy way of living that he presented to the nuns the island of Haverholm, where the little river which flowed between its banks shut them quite out from the world. There, the fame of their sanctity spread far and wide, so that many noblemen gave lands to Gilbert,

begging him to build convents near their own homes, so that peace and blessing might be brought closer to them. Years had been passing by whilst these changes went on, and Gilbert was growing old; besides, his foundations were large and numerous, and he desired to find some help in governing them. For this purpose, he undertook a journey to France to obtain the advice and assistance of the Cistercian fathers, who were assembling together for a general chapter at Citeaux.

Gilbert remained the greater part of the year in France, during which he spent some time in the company of the great S. Bernard, who gave him a staff, a stole, and a maniple to take back to England as a memorial of their meeting. Every one was glad to see S. Gilbert back in his own country again, and he set to work founding priories for men, the first of which was at Sempringham.

The Pope had now made Gilbert the head of his order; he had many houses under his control, and he had to go from convent to convent,

and even to cross the sea many times about the management of his possessions, and all this was a source of care and anxiety to him, especially as he was now advancing in years.

But in order that he might keep his mind resting in God alone, he kept a very austere rule of life. During meal-times, he would have by his side a platter, which he called "the Lord's dish," and in this he placed the greater part of the food which was served to him, that it might be given to the poor. While the community were sleeping, Gilbert would remain in prayer for hours, and even when he went to his bed, he would not lay his head on a pillow, but slept in a sitting posture, with his head leaning on his breast.

By the grace with which God rewards all who serve Him faithfully, the Saint was able to keep his soul always united to God in prayer, and when hymns and psalms were sung in the choir, tears of joy ran down his cheeks. When the close of his life was drawing near, Gilbert, who had always been loved and esteemed by

all who knew him, had to endure the suspicion of his friends, and the calumny of evil-minded persons, because of two instances of wickedness which happened among the lay-brothers he had founded. Some of them turned away from God, and rebelled against the holy rule they had adopted, wishing it to be made less hard and strict. To prevent further harm from their bad example, Gilbert excommunicated the two chief offenders, and they went to Rome to make a complaint to the Pope. These men were but poor brothers, one a smith, and the other a weaver, and perhaps the Head of the Church heard them with more compassion because they were not rich and learned—we may be sure they gave an exaggerated account of what had annoyed them, for the Holy Father decided in favour of the changes they wished, and sent a command to Gilbert to yield. Although the Saint was very much grieved by this event, which broke up all order and authority amongst his community, he obeyed in every point. A proud man would have treated these rebellious

brothers with anger and harshness, but he was so humble and forgiving that he took them back into the order, and was charitable and tender to them. Perhaps the greatest pain to Gilbert at this time, was, that those whom he most loved and honoured heard rumours of things being wrong and disorderly among his canons, and they considered he must be to blame. One of these was S. Thomas of Canterbury, then in exile, who wrote a letter of rebuke to Gilbert. During these trials the Saint humbled himself and gave thanks to God for allowing him to bear false accusations, and he acknowledged that these sufferings were sent to prevent him from loving the world too well, only praying that some time the innocence of his canons might be made known. This request was granted—men began to see the holiness of the order, and the sinfulness of those few brethren who had brought shame upon it, and then the general love and esteem for Gilbert revived. So the last days of the Saint were very peaceful; every one sought his



blessing ; bishops begged it upon their knees, and came from foreign lands asking for shreds of his clothing to carry back as relics, even King Henry (humbled after the death of the holy martyr of Canterbury) went to seek the benediction of Gilbert.

At last, however, the holy old man's sight failed him, and he could no longer manage the business of his order, but he still insisted on being carried into the refectory for meals, and would rise in the middle of the night to kneel by his bedside to pray. Thus he lived on until he was over a hundred years old, but he could not repress his desire for death, and sometimes exclaimed, "How long, Lord, wilt Thou forget me for ever?"

At length Gilbert felt his end approaching. He was at one of his lonely island monasteries then, and his death seemed so near that he received the last Sacraments of the Church, but his strength revived, and he was carried to Sempringham, where all the priors of his order came to take leave of him. He was quite un-

conscious of their presence, and kept repeating verses from the Scriptures in a low voice, and as the morning of the 4th February, 1189, dawned, his soul passed gently into the hands of God.

Gilbert had spent a simple, quiet life in the service of his Lord—he had been better known in the calm, sweet stillness of his cloister than in the stir and conflict of the world; he had worked no miracles in that long and holy lifetime, but after his death, it pleased Almighty God to heal many by his intercession, who came to kneel at his tomb. And then his sanctity became known, and twelve years after his death, his holy body was removed to a place befitting it, in the church of the priory, in the presence of a large concourse of people.

Although Gilbert of Sempringham is a canonized saint of our Church, he is not very widely known, or frequently remembered by people living in the world at the present day; perhaps to some his life may seem a very uneventful one. But if we would venerate him

as we ought, we must look at the work which was specially his. Terrible wickedness was raging throughout England in those early times, and to check this, God raised up this Saint of purity to save souls which were in danger of being lost, to show others the way of following Christ more perfectly by giving up home and friends, and riches, for the hard, stern life of the convent and monastery, and although we may not be called to the sacrifices they made, and the austere rule they kept under the example of S. Gilbert, there is not one amongst us who is not able, by divine help, to imitate that quiet dependence on God, that obedience to His holy Will, which is set before us in the history of the long life of the Saint of Sempringham.





### S. Simon Stock.

**T**HE order of Mount Carmel, which bears the name in which it glories, of the "Order of the Blessed Virgin," is one which has a great claim upon the love of all English hearts, because it was in our own land, to one of our own race, that Mary herself appeared and gave with her hands the holy scapular which is its badge.

The Saracens were cruelly persecuting and driving out Christians from the Holy Land, when, in the reign of Henry III., two English knights went on a pilgrimage to Mount Carmel, and finding there several of their countrymen living as hermits, entreated some of them to return to this land and draw down

God's blessing upon it by the example of a holy and retired life.

Lands were given them upon which to erect convents, and in one of these first Carmelite houses Simon Stock received the religious habit.

Before that time he had been living as a hermit in the woods of Kent, but God's Will was to bring to light his sanctity and learning, and after taking his degree at the Oxford University, Simon's talent and piety caused him to be elected as general of the whole Carmelite order. The holy man would have chosen to be hidden and unknown had such choice been granted him, but better than solitude, better than the hermit's cell with its peace and joy, did he love the Will of the Almighty, and so trusting in God and keeping his heart lowly, he strove to fulfil the duties belonging to his state.

So Simon Stock dwelt in the monastery of Newnham, outside the town of Cambridge, and there it happened that when pouring out

his heart before God in prayer, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him amid a brilliant light which gilded the walls, the roof, and the floor of his oratory, holding the sacred scapular in her hand. "Receive, my son, this scapular," she said, "it is the sign of my confraternity, a privilege to thee and thy order, in which he that dieth shall not suffer eternal fire. It is a sign of salvation, a safeguard in danger, the seal of an everlasting covenant."

Lovingly and reverently did S. Simon Stock press the holy scapular to his lips as the sweet vision disappeared; long he knelt in prayer and thanksgiving, acknowledging himself unworthy of so great a favour from the hands of his Blessed Mother, and when he rose it was with the devotion of a true son's heart that he pledged himself to make the scapular known and loved throughout his country.

Many persons received it at his hands, both religious and seculars, and the kings Edward I. and Edward II. wore the coarse brown scapular of Mary beneath their royal robes.

Many miracles have been worked in connection with this little badge of the confraternity of the Blessed Virgin, but the first which is recorded happened to one whom the Saint had himself enrolled. On one occasion, having gone to visit the Bishop of Winchester upon matters of business, the priest of one of the churches came in haste to S. Simon, entreating him to go to a person who was near death, and yet despaired of salvation, and would not allow the Name of God to be spoken before him. The Saint went quickly to the unhappy man, who lay upon his bed quite bereft of reason, grinding his teeth, and with a horribly distorted countenance.

S. Simon knelt a moment by his side, one brief earnest prayer went up to God through Mary, and then he placed the holy scapular around the man's neck. No sooner was this done than the sufferer recovered consciousness and very quickly was begging with tears to receive the Sacraments of the Church, and after these graces had been granted him, he expired in

peace, breathing the Names of Jesus and Mary with his closing lips.

Afterwards he appeared in a vision to the priest who had brought S. Simon to his help, declaring that by receiving the holy scapular he had obtained the happiness of dying in the grace of God.

In the year 1266, S. Simon Stock died at Bordeaux, where his body is supposed still to be interred, but his order remains to bring blessings upon England, and the little brown scapular which was given to him by the hand of Mary, in the quiet oratory of Newnham, has ever since been worn and prized by old and young, rich and poor, preserving the faithful from many a danger, strengthening them in the hour of temptation, granting especial comfort and assistance in the hour of death.







### S. Arot.

**A**THELSTAN, the young Prince of Kent, stood alone upon the battle-field where he had that day won a great victory; the sky above him was calm, and the stars shone out peacefully, and he thanked God for that success against the Danes, who had vowed they would root the name of Christian out of England. But Athelstan was thinking of what the holy S. Swithin had taught him many a time, that the bravest soldier was he who fought against sin and evil in his own heart, and sought by prayer and penance to deliver his country from its sins; and there, amidst the dead and dying, the old desire of his childhood for a cloister life,

was strong within his heart; and Athelstan knelt down upon the battle-field and asked God for guidance, and an angel from heaven seemed to speak to him and say, "Thou hast chosen the better part; go and do as thou desirest."

The abbey to which the young prince went was Glastonbury, where he became the monk Neot, and from the day of his entrance he began to go steadily on in the path of virtue, observing the different graces of his brethren, the silence of one, the humility of another, the penance, the charity, the meekness of still more as an example for his own life.

This young monk never regretted his luxurious home, never thought of his royal blood, but chose always to be one of the least of the brethren, delighting in mean and lowly offices.

When S. Neot was made a priest he became still more holy, and people crowded round him for comfort and advice, and in time God began to work miracles by him. At noontide the monks of the abbey retired to their cells for

private prayer, and this hour was held so sacred that none might venture to communicate with his brethren. One day Neot, whose cell was next the great gate of the monastery, heard a very violent knocking, and on going to the grating to see what it could be, he found a person whose business admitted of no delay. Neot tried to let him in at the door, but, to his confusion, he found he could not possibly reach the lock, because he was so very small in stature, but as the knocking began again more violently, and he could not summon any one to his help, the Saint prayed to God, and instantly the lock slid gently down the door until it was within his reach, upon which he opened it to the stranger. This answer to prayer was confirmed by all in the monastery, for the lock remained in its new place, and many people flocked there to see it.

At length God sent an angel messenger to tell Neot to leave his monastery and set out on foot into an unknown part of the country, and the Saint obeyed, walking over hill and

moor, as the Holy Spirit led him, until he reached a lonely spot in Cornwall, where he was told that his journey was ended, and that he was to spend seven years in a hermit's life supported by his own hands. One companion named Barino had been chosen with him to dwell in this spot, where once S. Gueryr had knelt and prayed, and where a fountain played, which, by virtue of his blessing, healed all who came to its waters in faith, and after one night had been spent there, Barino ran in haste to tell his friend that three fish were swimming in the water where the fountain rose. S. Neot bade him on no account to touch them, and having asked God what this strange thing meant, the angel came to him again, saying, that these fish were for his use, and every morning one might be taken for food. If he was obedient to this command the supply should never fail and three fish should be found daily in the waters.

So it was, and the Saint thanked God each night for the food miraculously supplied to

him. In this solitary spot Neot spent his time in prayer and penance, always advancing in the knowledge and love of God, but he was so severe with his body that once he became ill in consequence. After long wakefulness he had fallen into a quiet sleep, and his faithful Barino wished to prepare some food for him on awaking, but feeling at a loss as to how to cook it so as to suit his master's delicate state, he thoughtlessly took two fish instead of one from the miraculous fountain, and presented both to S. Neot when he awoke, one boiled and one roasted, that he might make his choice.

When he found what had been done, the Saint was much alarmed and bade Barino replace the fishes in the fountain just as they were, while he himself gave a day and night to humiliation and prayer, and at length his servant brought the news that both fish were swimming in the water. After this Neot's illness left him, and his daily food was continued the same as before.

For seven long years this holy man continued in the hardness of his hermit life, and then, having a great desire to assist others to know and serve God, he went to Rome to lay this purpose before the Holy Father and obtain his blessing. He was welcomed with great affection, and commanded to preach the gospel of Christ among the people, but S. Neot did not immediately return home, for he went first as a missionary to the unconverted men of Prussia and Northern Germany, and he was permitted to show forth the power of God by working many miracles.

At the end of a year the Saint returned to England, not to resume his hermit life, but to work at bringing back the church in Cornwall from the error and schism into which it had fallen, and he was so successful that many nobles forsook the world, and many of the neighbouring people gave him land on which to raise up a monastery of holy men to praise God.

But the time had come when Neot was to

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die; he had founded the house of Neotstowe and he was not spared to dwell among his children long. When an attack of fever came upon him the Saint knew that his earthly work was nearly done, and having received the holy Communion he gave up his soul to God in great peace. Multitudes came from all parts to see the remains of Neot; all who had diseases were healed, and so many people were converted by the wonders wrought at his tomb that they came in numbers to beg to be taken into the monastery, which it was necessary to enlarge. Then the sacred remains were carefully removed from their resting-place and re-buried on the north side of the high altar, while a rich fragrance arose and filled the church, as an emblem of the sweet perfume of holiness which had proceeded from the Saint during his life-time. The favour and blessing of God rested upon that place, and all who came to kneel at the shrine received an answer to the prayers which they offered through the intercession of holy S. Neot, who forsook home

and friends, rank and an earthly kingdom, to press on along the narrow, thorny path of the Cross, that so he might share in the glory of Christ in the kingdom of heaven.







### S. Louis, King of France.

**A**LMIGHTY GOD, in His wondrous wisdom, has chosen His saints from every rank of life, some poor and unknown to the world while they are in it, others great and [powerful, others young and weak by nature but strong in grace and love; no two have been exactly alike even in their way of pleasing our Lord, and this is a proof that no matter what our station may be, no matter whether we are rich or poor, wise or ignorant, nothing can stand in the way of our sanctification excepting our own want of generous, self-denying love.

There have been persons whose riches and power seemed to come between them and God,

but in order that we may believe that no wealth or greatness need draw us away from heavenly things, it has been the divine Will that the lives of many royal persons have become known, giving us an example of extraordinary holiness. The character of S. Louis, King of France, shines out brightly in the thirteenth century, in which he lived. He was the son of Louis VIII. and the pious Queen Blanche of Castile, and from this good mother he early learned to love God. Very often she would say to him, "I would rather see you lose your crown, I would rather see you die, than that your soul should be stained by mortal sin," and these words fixed themselves so deeply in his childish heart that he felt the greatest horror of offending God. His love for prayer was great, and thus his life was singularly free from human passions, and he learned to prize spiritual things far above the grandeur of earth.

Many who are placed in high stations lose that simple truthfulness which is so pleasing

to God, but it was not so with Louis; he would rather have borne any suffering than speak a false or deceitful word. Although in those times it was not possible to be taught as much as we have the power of learning now, he applied himself diligently to his studies, especially to Latin, because it helped him to read the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers of the Church in which he delighted. When Louis was twenty-one years of age and no longer under the control of his parents, he did not take up a gay and worldly life; his was the piety which comes from a heart all given to God,—not from constraint,—and therefore he continued as thoughtful, as serious, as devout, as he had been from his earliest days. Although he was now at liberty to be his own master, Louis treated his mother with great reverence and obedience, always seeking her advice, and following her counsels with great docility.

About this time the Emperor of Constantinople came to ask help from France in a war he was carrying on against the Greeks,

promising Louis the whole sacred crown of thorns worn by Jesus during His Passion if it was taken from the Venetians, who then possessed it. The thought of gaining so great a treasure—one which had truly rested on the sacred Head of the Lord he loved so well—delighted Louis, and he readily helped Baldwin with money and troops, and afterwards received the holy relic at Sens in the presence of a large number of ecclesiastics and nobles. Besides this, a piece of the true Cross was given to him, and the young king built a chapel to receive these relics, which is still to be seen in Paris.

In the month of May, 1249, the king embarked for the Holy Land, to engage in the Crusades, and when the army had reached Damietta, he made an address to the nobles who had followed him, saying that while he was there he wished to be considered, not as a king, but as one of themselves. He also reminded them that their purpose was to fight for the cause of God ; that if they died it was

for love of Him, while if they conquered it was for His glory, not their own. Inspired with courage by his words, the soldiers fought bravely, Damietta was conquered, and King Louis remained there during the summer, giving to all an example of piety.

A few months later the Count of Poitiers arrived with more soldiers, and they then resolved to besiege Cairo, the great capital of Egypt. During their march they were frequently attacked by the Saracens, but the French were always victorious, until at length a disease broke out amongst them, which carried off a number of their men. In this calamity S. Louis was as calm as he had been during their success; he went amongst his troops encouraging them to submit with patience to the Will of God, reminding them of the eternal reward of heaven, which would more than make up for all they had to bear on earth.

Next, it pleased God to try this holy king by further suffering, for he took the infection

himself, and when, resolving to return to Damietta, he had ordered his troops to start there, they were surprised by a party of Saracens, who made him a prisoner. Although he was now in captivity, Louis received all the care and respect due to his rank, and being attended by clever physicians, was soon cured of his illness, but he had to remain in the hands of the Saracens, and bear many annoyances from them. During his imprisonment the king contrived to pursue as far as possible his usual rule of life, omitting neither fast nor penance, and to every inconvenience he submitted with sweetness and humility.

When the ransom for his liberty was being arranged, the Saracens required from him some form of oath which he deemed displeasing to God, so he would not make it, and when his relations and friends entreated him to yield, that he might return more speedily to them, he said, "God is my Witness that I love you dearly, but Jesus and His Cross are far dearer,

and I will not offend Him by doing what is proposed to me."

The Saracens were furious at his firmness; with a drawn sword at his throat they threatened him with death, but he said, "You can but kill my body; God alone has charge of my soul, and you cannot harm that," so at length they released him, and he returned to France.

Now that he was once more in his own kingdom, the good king visited the different states, leaving everywhere a remembrance of his benevolence and piety; to all who were poor or suffering he was merciful and gentle, but to the profane and wicked he was most severe, making a law that for oaths and blasphemies the offenders should be punished by having the tongue pierced with a hot iron. But in ordering this, he told them that, if by bearing the penalty he could banish all impure and profane speech from his kingdom, he would endure it with thankfulness and joy.

No great or lasting success had been granted

him in the first crusade he had undertaken, but Louis had a longing to repair again to the Holy Land. Accordingly, preparations were made, but when they were proposing to attack Tunis, illness once more broke out in the camp ; the king's eldest son died, and Louis himself was attacked with it, and felt so sure that he should die that he spent his remaining time in preparing to meet God and arranging for the welfare of the people he was leaving.

His instructions to his son Philip, who was to be the next king, were full of beauty and holiness ; he entreated him to make the service of God his chief care, to choose the guidance of holy and wise priests, and be ruled by their counsels, to be charitable to the poor and just to all his subjects, to separate himself from all detractors, to hate evil and spread truth and peace abroad in his kingdom.

When the disease gained ground, Louis received the Last Sacraments with great devotion, and as the end drew near he caused himself to be laid upon a bed strewn with ashes,



where he expired on the 25th of August, 1270, after reigning forty-four years. Many abbeys and monasteries were founded by this good king, who lived and died in the practice of true and simple piety, valuing lightly his earthly greatness, using it as a gift of God for which he must render an account, and setting before him as the only thing his heart desired that heavenly crown which should be his through all eternity.





### S. Genebieve.

**T**HE little Geneviève was, the child of a poor French shepherd, who lived at a place called Nanterre, not far from Paris. There she was born in the year 422, and there she began at a very early age to take care of her father's sheep.

Her business was to watch the flock from early morning until night, to see that it did not wander too far, she had to be careful lest the little lambs hurt themselves in rocky, unsafe places, and doubtless the child felt sometimes weary of her work; yet she did all these little duties as well as she could, because she loved God so dearly that she wanted Him to be pleased with her, and she

never forgot that He watched every action and every thought.

When Geneviève was seven years old the holy Bishop Germanus was passing through France on his way to England; crowds of people went to receive his blessing, and our little shepherdess, with her parents, were among them.

God gave the good bishop a special light to know that this child was one whom He had chosen from others to belong to Himself and become a great Saint, and guided by this divine inspiration, Germanus had her called close to him and asked her if she would present herself entirely to Jesus Christ for her whole life. Geneviève's little face beamed with joy as she answered that she would gladly do so, for it was her great desire, and she begged the bishop to bless her and consecrate her to the special service of Almighty God. So Germanus went into the church, and resting his hand upon the child's head, gave her to our Lord, and prayed that He would fill her heart

with grace and love, and then he bade her parents bring her to him on the next day, that he might speak to her again.

Upon that morning the bishop asked Geneviève if she remembered what a great promise she had made to God the day before, and she replied that she did remember, and that she hoped to keep that promise faithfully till she died, if God would help her by His grace to do so.

Germanus then gave the little girl a brass medal, upon which a cross was engraved, and he bade her always wear it to remind her that she was consecrated to the service of Christ, Who bore the cross and died upon it for love of her; he also desired her never to put on bracelets, chains, and other ornaments, such as children usually delight in.

Little Geneviève went home quite full of earnest thoughts and desires, and she resolved to pray more than ever, and to give up small pleasures and amusements, even natural and innocent ones, so that she might begin to

practise self-denial as Jesus her Spouse had done.

One day, when Geneviève begged very hard to go into the church for a little while, her mother grew very angry, and, forgetting what was right, struck the child upon her face. Such passion must always be a great offence against God, but He is especially grieved by any injury or unkindness shown to those who are very dear to Him, and He showed His displeasure by turning this woman perfectly blind, in punishment for what she had done.

Geneviève ran to a well to fetch some water for her mother to bathe her eyes with, and in order that it might do her more good, the child made over it the sign of the Cross, and by the power of God the blindness was immediately cured.

Thus passed her holy childhood, and when Geneviève was fifteen years old she had advanced so much in piety and the love of God that she was allowed by the Archbishop of Paris to receive the religious habit. Then she began to

be still more strict in her daily life ; the self-denial she had practised at seven years old was increased now, and she took as little food as was possible, and that generally of barley bread, never drinking anything but pure water. This habit she continued until she was more than fifty years of age, when, in obedience to her bishop, she began to take a little milk and some fish. Prayer, which gives life and strength to the soul, seemed also to give life and strength to the body of Geneviève, or else she could not have lived upon so little food ; every Saturday night she spent the hours in beseeching God's help to pass Sunday with devotion. Like every other Saint, Geneviève met with contempt and persecution ; people spread evil reports of her and attacked her character, but she neither murmured nor excused herself, for to her it was only a part of the Cross of Christ, only one little thorn from the crown which pierced Him. Germanus once more passed by Paris on his second journey to England, and knowing

that people were accusing her of being a hypocrite and an impostor, he took pains to treat her with special kindness and regard, going to visit and converse with her.

When Paris was attacked by an enemy, the inhabitants were terrified, and began to hide themselves and their property in secure places, but Geneviève had too strong a trust in God to be afraid; she assembled the women of the town, beseeching them to fast and pray, and accordingly they joined her in passing whole days in the church, crying to Heaven for help. Then, when the people were suffering and dying from hunger, because no food could be brought into the city, the Saint's compassionate heart was so filled with pity that she went out at the head of a company to seek provisions, and returned with a great deal of corn.

Towards the close of her life, the people began to repent of the unkindness they had shown Geneviève, especially when they saw that God gave her the power of working miracles; and many flocked to her, seeking her

help and her prayers. And yet it was not until she was dead—until her long and holy life of ninety years had passed away—that the citizens of Paris began to understand that a Saint had lived among them whom they had not loved or honoured as they ought. Her body was buried in a church which now bears her name, and Geneviève was made the Patron Saint of France, and those who visit the country of her birth, the country where her relics are still preserved, will hear the story of the sweet and simple life of the little shepherd maiden.







## S. Roch.

**T**OWARDS the close of the thirteenth century, S. Roch, who is considered the special patron of the sick, was born at Montpellier, one of the chief towns of Languedoc. His father was one of the principal inhabitants of that part, respected both for his piety and courage, and, like his good wife Libérie, was active in works of charity. For a long time they had no children, but in answer to the prayer of Libérie, a son was born to them, who came into the world with the mark of a red cross upon his body. They called him Roch, and as his mother had begged that God would give him to her, not to bring honour to their name, but to do good to the

poor and bear adversity for the Divine glory, it appeared that her desire was heard and that from his birth the child should bear the signs of future sanctity. As his coming into the world was miraculous, so was his abstinence, for upon Wednesdays and Fridays the infant only took nourishment once in the day.

When S. Roch was but five years old his friends were astonished at his love of penance, for he denied himself everything that was not positively necessary, and seemed inspired by the Holy Spirit to shun every kind of self-indulgence.

By the time this little boy was twelve years old his chief pleasure was to do good to the poor, to whom he showed the greatest love, but all these actions were done to glorify God, and not to gain the esteem of men.

His father, when lying on his death-bed, called Roch to him and entreated him to live in piety and innocence, and to devote himself to the help of widows, orphans, and all who were in sorrow or pain, so that he might draw

down the blessing of Heaven, and the good son promised to remember these last commands and obey them faithfully.

Libérie was so overcome by the loss of her husband that she soon died also, and thus Roch was alone at the age of twenty years in the possession of the property they had left him.

He immediately distributed all that he could get into his own power amongst the poor and needy, and then, leaving the rest in the hands of his uncle, set out in the habit of a pilgrim, to walk to the city of Rome. When he had reached a town called Acquapendente, he heard that the plague was raging violently there, and so he went to the hospital and offered his services in attending upon the sick.

The governor saw that the Saint was young and well-born, and therefore he doubted his ability to be useful, and he would not accept his services, although he praised the desire and zeal which had prompted him to offer help

But in the end the earnest petitions of S. Roch overcame the governor's doubts, and he was allowed to visit the sufferers, whom he touched with his right hand, making the sign of the cross, and every one regained health without an exception.

Then the Saint went about the town curing in the same way those who were seized with the infection, and they called him the good angel, whom God had sent to their assistance.

S. Roch's first design had been to travel on foot to Rome, and this grew stronger when he heard that the plague was raging there, so he hastened on, and upon his arrival sought Cardinal Britonique, who was a very holy man, to whom he made his confession before receiving the Holy Eucharist.

God made known to this cardinal that Roch was endowed with many unusual graces, and he therefore besought him to deliver their city also from the terrible plague. The Saint gave himself some time in prayer, and then rising,

made the sacred sign upon the forehead of the cardinal, as a means of keeping him from infection. This mark was noticed by several persons, who said it was a disfigurement and ought to be removed, but when the cardinal repeated this to S. Roch, he exclaimed :

“My father, no servant must be ashamed of his Master’s livery. I would ask you to glory in the sign of eternal salvation, that powerful sign by which the Son of God redeemed you.”

Then the cardinal no longer wished to be free of the miraculous cross, and he took S. Roch to see the Pope, who at once observed the mark of wonderful holiness upon his face, and received him with great joy.

Roch prostrated himself at the feet of His Holiness, and bathing them with his tears, begged his blessing and absolution for his sins. The Pope replied that he did not need his absolution, and began to inquire about his birth and parentage ; but to that the Saint made no reply, and took his leave, dwelling for three years in Rome. During this time he delivered

the neighbouring villages and towns from contagion by virtue of the sign of the cross, and when he left Rome he carried with him the grateful blessing of those he had assisted, and spread health and strength in every part through which he passed.

On reaching the town of Plaisance, he found the plague raging badly, and immediately entered the hospital, where, after relieving the sufferers, he fell into an unusually deep sleep. Then a sweet and heavenly voice addressed him, saying :

“ Roch, up to this time you have done many good works for love of Me, but now I call on you to endure great sorrows for My sake.”

At these words the Saint awoke in a burning fever and in violent pains, for which he instantly gave God thanks ; but, as his suffering increased, he could not help crying out, which so distressed the other sufferers that he went from the hospital, and lay down upon the ground outside the door. They tried to persuade him to return, but as he continued to

refuse, they began to believe he was mad and drove him outside the town. He dragged himself, with great difficulty, to the adjoining forest, in which he found a miserable, deserted hut, where he retired, begging God to protect him.

His prayer was answered by a miracle, for immediately a cloud descended from heaven and formed a stream before the little hut, which may be seen to this day, from which the Saint drank, and then relieved his sufferings by bathing in it.

The providence of the Almighty employed another means of supplying His servant with food. Close by the forest were some grand houses, to which persons had retired for fear of the plague, and amongst these was a rich man named Gothard, who kept many servants and also a number of dogs, who were being trained for sporting.

One day, when Gothard was dining, one of these dogs came in, and taking a roll of bread from his hand, carried it away. His master

smiled, thinking the animal was hungry, and let it take the bread, which it carried to S. Roch. The next day, both at dinner and at supper, it did the same thing, and Gothard, believing the dog had not been properly fed, scolded his servants for letting it go hungry. But when he found that the animal had eaten its usual food, Gothard began to be curious as to what became of the bread, and next time the dog carried off the roll from his hand he ran after it into the forest, and there saw it present the food to S. Roch, who gave it his benediction.

Gothard then entered the hut, and finding the Saint lying on the earth in great suffering, inquired what illness had overtaken him.

Roch answered that he had the plague, and entreated his visitor to leave him, for fear of taking the infection, but upon his return home, Gothard was so impressed by the example of kindness in a dog, that he returned to offer to attend upon the sick man himself. Feeling sure that such a desire could only come from



the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Saint agreed to let him stay, but although the dog brought bread every day, Gothard was puzzled to know how he should live himself and find nourishment for the sufferer.

Roch told him to take the pilgrim's habit, which he himself had worn, and go and ask alms, but Gothard hesitated at first because it seemed a very hard thing to do in a place where every one knew him, but God's grace overcame his human respect, and he bravely entered Plaisance, asking help from all he met. Many were angry, many ridiculed, others reproached him for seeking to take bread from the truly poor and needy, and so, through all the town, Gothard only received two loaves.

Upon his return S. Roch comforted him in his disappointment, and wishing to render good for evil to the people of Plaisance, he went there, and by the sign of the cross, cured the sick in both houses and hospitals.

When he returned at night to his wretched hut, many persons followed him, marvelling at

the power God had bestowed upon him. On his way a heavenly voice said to him: "Roch, Roch, your prayers are heard, and I give you back your health. Return now to your own country and give yourself to the practice of penance, so that you may prepare to be admitted to the company of the blessed in heaven."

This voice astonished those who were permitted to hear it, and knowing now his name and that he was a man of great sanctity, they threw themselves at his feet and begged him to grant his special protection to the town. Roch promised, if they on their part would promise him not to speak of what they had heard during his lifetime.

When Gothard saw that his friend had suddenly become perfectly well, he felt still more reverence for him, and desired to follow his example, and giving up his possessions, retire from the world for the rest of his life. For a short time S. Roch stayed with him in the forest, teaching him different exercises of

prayer and penance, and then bidding Gothard farewell, returned to France.

God directed His servant to go to his birth-place, Montpellier, and pass a hidden, suffering life in that town where he had been so loved and honoured.

War was desolating the country at that time, and every one dwelt in continual fear of enemies, so that when S. Roch entered the town in his pilgrim's habit, they believed he was a secret spy and cast him into prison. His cell was dirty and unhealthy, and even full of scorpions, but the Saint remained there with peace and joy, adding great austerities to the sufferings imposed upon him, eating little, and that only uncooked food, scourging his body, and passing his nights in vigils. For five years he existed thus, during which time none pitied him, none tried to deliver him; but God and the Blessed Virgin were his friends, and from Them he received great graces and consolations.

At last it was made known to him that his

sufferings were coming to a close, and he begged his gaoler to summon a priest to assist him in preparing for death. They brought one, who, entering the miserable cell, found it splendid with rays of a surpassing brightness, which so surprised the priest that he could scarcely utter a word.

The Saint knelt at his feet, made his confession, and begged to receive Holy Communion. As the priest left the cell he sought the governor, and asked him how he dared offend God by keeping a man imprisoned who was not only innocent, but so holy, adding that a heavenly brightness was lighting up the place where the captive lay.

The news of what was taking place spread quickly through the town, which caused an immense crowd to gather round the prison, eager to see this holy servant of God.

Soon after S. Roch had received the Sacraments he grew worse, and then the heavenly voice he had heard before spake once again, and said, "The time has come, My well-beloved

son, when I am to carry your soul into the presence of My Father ; if then you have any request to make for yourself or for others, ask quickly, and it shall be granted you."

The dying man thanked our Lord for this favour, and asked that all who should implore His help might be preserved or healed from the plague. It was granted, and immediately afterwards S. Roch died, lying upon the ground with his eyes turned to heaven.

Bright rays of light began to stream through the narrow-barred window of the cell, which the gaoler observed, and opening the door he saw the body of the holy Roch stretched upon the ground, lamps burning at his feet and at his head, with a little board by his side upon which these words were written, "Those who, being seized with plague, have recourse to the intercession of S. Roch, shall be delivered from this malady."

When this marvel was related to the governor, he was surprised and alarmed, and more so because he was told that his prisoner

had been his own nephew, who, upon his departure for Italy, had left to him the charge of his property, and if he was inclined to disbelieve the truth of this it would be easy to make sure by examining the body of the Saint to see if there was a red cross upon it. The cross was found, and then every one knew that the man who had been so ill-treated was, indeed, the son of the former Governor of Montpellier and his good wife Libérie. Their grief was intense, and they bathed the Saint's feet with their tears and prayed constantly that he would intercede for them with God.

They buried him in the principal church, and afterwards his uncle built a chapel where his relics were enshrined, and in nearly every church throughout France there is an image of the Saint, who still protects his country, and by whose intercession such glorious miracles are worked even in the present day.

"Oh! blessed S. Roch, patron of the sick, have pity upon those who lie upon a bed of suffering. Your power was so great with God

while you were in the world, that by the sign of the Cross numbers were healed from their diseases. And now that power is not less in heaven. Offer then to God our sighs and tears and obtain from Him that health we seek, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."





### S. Helier.

**A** GREAT many hundred years ago, a rich noble and his wife who lived on the borders of the Rhine, came to the holy priest Cunibert, and begged him to ask God to give them a little son. Cunibert had been wishing for a long time to help some of the Germans to become Christian people, and when Sigebert and his wife made this request, he promised to offer his prayers to the Almighty, if in return they would give him the child who was born.

They agreed to this, and it pleased God to hear the prayers of His servant, and a beautiful little son was given to these happy parents. But by that time, Cunibert had gone to the



Holy Land, and it was three years before he came back and asked for the little one who had been promised to him for the service of God. Sigebert laughed and said *his* son should be rich and great like all his ancestors, he should ride on horseback and wield a sword and spear, not be a poor monk like Cunibert, and the child's mother too thought lightly of her word, and felt she could not part with one so very dear.

The holy Cunibert went away sorrowful, for he had hoped to train the noble German boy for God, but Jesus in heaven loved the child, and was going to bring him to His blessed feet after a little time of waiting. For seven years Sigebert and Leufgarde rejoiced over their bright, beautiful son, and he was the treasure of their house, and the favourite of all who knew him; but suddenly, without any reason which men could tell, his strength forsook him, he ran and played no more, but lay in pain and weakness upon his mother's knee. At last one day when he was suffering very much, the

little boy cried out, "Take me to the holy man to whom you promised me," and his parents dared not refuse—they felt that God had punished them for breaking the promise they had made to His servant, and so they sent their child lying upon a litter to Cunibert.

When the little one saw the monk he said, "Dear holy man, have pity on me and ask your God to heal me," and Cunibert knelt down by the child's bed, and his prayers were heard, for the pain left him and he became quite strong. In those times, baptism was not given so early, but Cunibert began to instruct the little boy about the sacrament which he was to receive, and gave him the name of Helier.

The child was very happy, and soon he learned his letters and could read the Psalms. There were no more of the banquets he had been used to in his father's hall, but the barley bread which Cunibert gave him, contented him well, even though he had but one meal except on feast days.

God's grace made this little German boy love

this hard life better than his noble parents' home, and the Holy Spirit took up Its dwelling in his heart and did wonderful things there, making him very holy. The wild, untaught men of the German forest came to see the child who had been given to the service of God, and they brought sick and blind people to him, whom he cured by the touch of his little hand in the name of the Almighty. When Sigebert, the father of Helier, heard these things he was angry, for he did not know God, and he said that Cunibert had dealings with the evil one, and he wanted his child given back to him, so all his relatives and friends resolved to seek an opportunity of killing the holy monk.

God thought fit to make known to his servant what was about to befall him, and therefore, in the morning, when he had sung matins with his little pupil, Cunibert told Helier that he must fly away, for his own death was near.

The boy cried bitterly, and begged to be baptized, "O my father, will you not baptize me?" he said again and again, but—guided by

God—Cunibert replied, “My son, it is the divine Will that another hand shall do that.” The boy was very sad at the thought of leaving his spiritual father, but he was too obedient to murmur, and after spending their day together in the church, at evening time they parted, each going to rest in his own cell.

When Cunibert was alone he began to sing psalms, and while he was singing that one which begins “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto Thee,” the wicked murderers rushed in, and as he bent his head, they struck him down and escaped immediately.

Helier thought that he heard some noise, and therefore came to his master’s cell. There the boy found him, bathed in blood, but with a calm, peaceful smile upon his face, and one finger still on his book pointing to the verse he had been singing, when his soul passed away.

Helier’s tears fell fast, but he dared not stay—his orders had been to fly, so he covered the

body of his martyred friend, and left the church, not knowing where to go.

During six days he wandered on through wild and pathless forests, in terrible fear lest his father's friends should overtake him, but all the while he was lifting up his heart in prayer, saying, "Lead me in Thy way—my God, save me." After a time Helier reached a town, and feeling weak and ill, he asked a poor widow whom he met to help him, and for two weeks she gave him shelter. Then when he begged her to point out some spot where he could serve God in peace, she led him in sight of S. Mary's Church. For five years Helier dwelt in the porch of the church, following the rule of life he had practised with the holy Cunibert; the rain formed deep pools round him, the sharp stones were stained with the blood from his bare feet, but he never sought another shelter, waiting patiently for God to give him some guide in place of the one he had lost. And when he needed food, he sought it at the house of the poor widow who had been so

kind to him. The people of that place began to notice the strange life of this holy youth, and they learned to put great faith in his prayers. At length a strange event happened to him which filled every one with surprise.

A rich nobleman there had a little child who suddenly died, and the parents, in their terror, rushed to the bishop of the town, begging him to command Helier to restore the infant's life. The bishop sought him in the church-porch, and gave him the command; and, though Helier marvelled, his obedience was so perfect, that he followed in silence as they led him to the little corpse. Then the thought came that it might be a sign God was going to grant him his long desire, that his soul might be regenerated in the waters of baptism, so he knelt down and prayed that if it pleased the Almighty that he might be made a Christian, this child's life should be given him. When he had finished his prayer, the infant began to move and cry. The next night Jesus came in a vision to

Helier, bidding him go to a certain place, where he should be baptized; and, although it gave him pain to leave the good widow who had befriended him so long, he started at once, and journeyed on into Normandy, where, by the sea-shore, he found the holy man to whom God had directed him.

At last Helier received the sacrament, for which he had prayed so long; and when he had stayed three months with Marculfus, he longed to be doing more for Christ, serving Him by prayer and penance in some lonely spot. A group of islands were within sight of the monastery of Marculfus—those which we know in our own day as the Channel Islands; and there Helier's spiritual guide sent him, in company with a priest called Romardus, and they quickly crossed to the island of Jersey. No Christian foot, it is supposed, had ever touched that ground before, and the rough, simple islanders were amazed at this man who settled in their midst, fasting and praying by day and night. There are two


huge rocks which jut out into the sea, divided from the island by a sort of chasm, through which the water dashes at high tide, and on the larger of these S. Helier made his hermitage. Now, visitors to the pretty verdant island go to look at the rough stones upon the shelving rock where once the holy hermit dwelt, and they are shown a hole where, it is said, he slept during the brief time he gave to rest. And thus Helier was to begin to preach the cross of Jesus Christ to the untaught peasants, for they found out his holiness, and brought their sick to him for healing, and God enabled him to work such miracles as convinced those who witnessed them that the Christian faith was true.

In three years time, Marculfus came to visit the Saint upon his barren rock, and they talked long together of what God's grace had done in their own souls, and the souls of others, and rejoiced that He had let them, help in the work of bringing men to the knowledge of Christ crucified.



While Marculfus stayed, a vessel was seen approaching the island, bearing the dreaded Saxon standard, and the poor natives were in great alarm ; but he, with Helier and Romardus, knelt on the top of the bare rock, crying to God for help. Prayer is very strong—we shall not know until we reach the next world what marvellous things have been done by prayer ; and so now, though the Saxon ships had almost grated against the rocky shore, a black cloud suddenly overspread the heavens, and a fearful storm arose, in which most of the vessels were destroyed, and the few enemies who succeeded in landing were quickly overcome.

Three days later, Marculfus went back to France, taking Romardus too, so that Helier was alone in his retreat, and there for twelve long years he dwelt a hard and painful life, yet one of strange sweetness, for God was always near him. One night the sweet face of his Lord appeared to him in a vision, and smiling, said, “ My beloved son, in three days



thou shalt depart from this world, adorned with thine own blood."

There was one hour in the day when the sea retreated from the chasm, so that there was a dry passage from the shore to the rock, and then his spiritual guide always visited him for a short time, and to him Helier related this vision.

On the third day the Saint looked out upon the sea, and saw that a number of Saxon ships approached the island; then he felt sure that his Lord was coming quickly, and he went back to pray in his cell. The pagans noticed some sea-birds fluttering round the rocky home of Helier, and they soon scaled the cliff, and found him; but when they saw neither gold nor treasures, they thought him some poor madman, until one suggested he might be a Christian hermit, and, rushing up, struck off his head with a sword.

When the priest came to cross over on his daily visit to the hermitage next morning, he saw the body of Helier lying on the sand—

the head rested on his breast, between his two hands, a calm smile upon the holy lips, which had closed in murmured prayers.

How many were converted by S. Helier we do not know, but we are sure that his fasts, his prayers, and his blood cried to God for mercy and blessing upon this little cluster of islands where he taught the faith of Christ. His memory yet lives in the name of the principal town of Jersey, and those of the peasantry who still love to tell histories of his time—although, alas! they have wandered from the truth he taught—will show strange marks, like the print of feet upon the rock, which they say were left by the people who were healed by the holy S. Helier so many hundred years ago.





### S. Malburga.

**E**NGLAND—our own dear country—  
was strangely different in olden times  
to what it is now. Whatever wars  
disturbed its tranquillity there was always  
peace in the quiet convents and monasteries,  
which flourished in every part of the land, and  
from which the prayer and penance of many  
saints were offered up to God.

We scarcely know the names of some of our  
own saints, and yet they were intended to  
stand as examples to their race of what  
divine grace can do in the hearts of English  
men and women, leading them on to useful  
and holy lives.

In one of these old, retired convents at

Wimbourne in Dorsetshire, Walburga was trained in the practice of piety, under the care of an abbess who was distinguished for her sanctity, and here she received an education which fitted her for the work she was to do at a future time in a distant land.

Walburga could read and write Latin with ease ; she also was familiar with the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and when she was not engaged in study she had to work with her hands, as the holy rule of S. Benedict enjoined.

Her father, S. Richard, had left her at Wimbourne when he started with his son Winibald on a pilgrimage to the tomb of the apostles at Rome, upon which journey he was taken ill, dying in Lucca, where he was buried and venerated as a saint.

Time passed on in the quiet cloister, and Walburga became a nun there when her education was completed, and in works of usefulness and happy hours of prayer her life went on, until she was nearly forty years of age,

and then letters came to Wimbourne, from Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, begging that nuns might be sent to assist in his missionary toils. This happened in the year 748, and thirty nuns at once offered to give up their peaceful home and travel to the new country at the call of God. They set sail, and at first the voyage was favourable, but at last such a violent storm arose that the sailors despaired of reaching land. S. Walburga had been quietly absorbed in prayer, but when they roused her, she stood up and commanded the storm to cease in the name of God, and immediately there was a calm and they reached the port safely.

They then went to a church in Antwerp to pray, and proceeded to Mentz, where Boniface met them with Willibald, the brother of Walburga, whom she had been separated from so many years, and who was now the Bishop of Eichstadt, while his brother Winibald was an abbot with the care of seven monasteries in Thuringia.

S. Boniface placed Walburga at the head of a convent in Thuringia, under the direction of Winibald, and here she and her nuns formed their daily life upon the same plan as they had used in the old abbey of Wimbourne, devoting themselves much to the study of books and transcribing the Holy Gospels and the Psalter diligently. At that time the German nations were barbarous and wild, they worshipped the gods of war and thunder, but the wonderful preaching of Winibald and the austere life of Walburga and her nuns filled them with reverence, and in process of time the country round grew civilized.

When this district had become orderly, Winibald and his holy sister sought out another spot in a wild forest country, where they established a monastery for monks and nuns, and although at first the natives were angry and threatened to kill them, they became at last peaceable and Christian.

In about ten years Walburga had the grief of losing her brother by death, which made her

very desolate, but he had commended the monks and nuns to her care, and she tried to rule according to his wishes. It was a hard and trying life there, in a foreign land, amongst rough Germans, with the care of the monastery pressing upon her—a far different life to the peace of Wimbourne, where she had spent her early, happy years.

But Walburga's heart glowed with the desire of converting darkened souls to the love of Christ, and so she was content to be there enduring every difficulty as a cross sent by God. She had great strength of character, but to this was added a spirit of unusual meekness and humility, which made her much beloved. Once after Winibald's death, Walburga remained a very long time in the church praying, but night closed in, and she could not find the way to her cell without a light. Upon asking for one the sacristan refused it to her and instead of using her authority she went quietly towards her cell, a bright light shining upon her from surrounding angels, which con-



tinued in the convent until the hour for Matins.

Another miracle is told of her during her life. The daughter of a noble family in the neighbourhood lay at the point of death, with her parents weeping over her, and hearing of their grief, Walburga felt a great desire to visit them. It was evening time when she reached the castle, and great savage wolf-dogs kept watch at the door, who barked angrily at the sound of her footsteps. When the master of the house heard that a stranger was approaching he bade his servants let her in at once, lest the fierce dogs should tear her to pieces, but she passed through them slowly, showing no fear and receiving no harm, as she said, quietly, "They will not hurt Walburga."

When the baron was told that it was the abbess of the convent he received her with much respect, leading her to the sick-room, where she remained all night in prayer, and then in the morning restored the daughter in

perfect health to her parents, who were full of gratitude and surprise.

Having done a great work for God in spreading truth amidst the people of these German forests, Walburga died in the year 776. Her face appeared radiant with beauty then, and a sweet unearthly fragrance filled the church in which she was laid, while the torches that had been placed round her coffin were miraculously lighted.

Many years after her death, the church and monastery began to decay and Walburga's tomb was neglected, upon which she appeared in a vision to Otkar, then the bishop, reproaching him with "dishonouring the sepulchre in which her body awaited the resurrection." Otkar called his clergy together, the tomb was opened, and they carried the sacred remains in procession to Eichstadt, but on the way to the cathedral the mules which drew the coffin paused before the Church of the Holy Cross and refused to go on, so that it became the resting-place of S. Walburga.

More years went by and then the abbess of the convent at Monheim begged from the bishop a portion of these sacred relics, and the tomb was opened, when the bones were found moistened with drops of a dewy liquid of a sweet, strong odour. A portion of these bones were taken to Monheim, and on the way a boy who suffered from epilepsy touched the coffin and was healed directly, and the abbess of the convent also received a miraculous cure.

For a long time she had been lame from gout in her feet, and as she slept, an old man in the dress of a priest appeared to her, bidding her rise and go to the church.

She replied that the bell for Matins had not sounded, nor could she go unless she was carried there.

"Arise, and go quickly," said the heavenly visitor, "for S. Willibald, amidst a company of angels, has come to see where you have laid his sister."

The abbess rose directly, finding herself perfectly well, and went quickly to the church

to offer her thanksgiving to God and S. Walburga.

This shrine became a very favourite place of pilgrimage ; the lame and crippled regained the use of their limbs, the blind received their sight, and others were restored from different kinds of sickness.

Other miracles were also worked. A little girl was too fond of play, loving it more than praying to God, and one day her ball remained fixed in her hand, and no power could remove it until she knelt at Walburga's shrine and asked her help. Another time a woman who persisted in spinning upon holidays of obligation, was corrected by the wool clinging tightly to her hand, from which she was not freed until she sought the Saint's intercession.

The miracle for which Walburga is most renowned, and which is still going on, is of the oil which comes from her bones. It falls in drops into a silver bowl, and if in carrying it away this oil is treated with want of reverence, it instantly disappears, and it must be kept

with great care. It flows more freely during the time of holy Mass and upon the feasts of S. Walburga. Many wonderful cures have been worked by this oil, the most frequent being the restoration of sight. Too many cases have been proved to mention now, and if this seems difficult to understand, we must accept it with the simple faith of true children of the Church, knowing that God's power has no limit, but that He is "glorious in His saints, wonderful in His majesty, doing wonders."





### S. Winefride.

**S**OME time during the seventh century a child was born of noble parents in Montgomeryshire, who grew up to be a great servant of God. This was S. Beuno, who, after he had received the holy habit of religion, journeyed into another part of Wales, to visit his relations who dwelt there. His sister had married a virtuous and noble husband, who welcomed S. Beuno kindly, and gave him a piece of ground on which to build a church, and here, with their only child, the maiden Winefride, they came daily, to be present at holy Mass. These wise parents advised their young daughter to give heed to the instructions of S. Beuno, but she needed

no such bidding, for she loved to listen to the words which fell from his lips, and often sought him out to beg him to guide her in a life of piety. Winefride's father intended marrying her to some nobleman, bestowing on her a large fortune, but already God began to make her heart so entirely His own, that no other love could find place there. After much thought and prayer she sought S. Beuno one day, and told him her desire to belong to Christ alone, and her fear that by so doing she should displease her father; but when the Lord Theorith heard from the saint that God was calling Winefride to give up all earthly love, he gave her full permission to forsake the world, and also resolved to retire as much as he could from the company of men, spending the largest part of his great wealth upon the poor.

Winefride felt as if she could never sufficiently thank God for the favour He had shown her. Prostrate before the altar she watched whole nights in the church, where the hours

seemed as moments for love of her Lord Who dwelt there, and she procured a little oratory near to S. Beuno's cell, where she could visit him frequently, and be led forward in spiritual things.

The enemy of our souls is always angry when a heart is thus wholly turned to God and heaven, and so (hoping to do her harm), he put into the mind of Prince Cradocus, a wicked love for Winefride.

One Sunday, when her parents had gone to church, leaving Winefride to follow them after finishing some charitable duty, this young man entered the house, pretending to have business with her father. The holy girl did not at first think he wished to do her any injury, so she received him kindly, asking him to pass into another room, where he could remain until Lord Theorith's return. Then the wicked thought of Cradocus turned to words, and he began to speak of his love for Winefride in a way which caused her to tremble with fear; but she sought God in her heart,



and, directed by His Holy Spirit, answered by an apology for the meanness of her dress, and asked him to permit her to retire to make some change in it more suited for the presence of so noble a visitor.

Once free, Winefride slipped away from the house by another door, running with all her speed towards the church ; but Cradocus, becoming suspicious, rushed into the room where she had retired, and pursued her eagerly down the hill. He soon overtook her, and then, in his rage, drew his sword and struck her such a blow that at the first stroke her head was severed from her body and rolled down to the church where the congregation were kneeling. Terrible as the sight of her blood was, the people gazed with still more surprise at a clear rapid spring which gushed out at the very spot upon which her head first fell, but as they caught sight of the wretched Cradocus wiping his stained sword upon the grass above them, they called upon God to revenge the murder.

S. Beuno had been preparing to offer the Holy Sacrifice, but by God's direction he left the altar, and taking the head of the martyred girl in his hands, approached the wretched murderer and besought God to execute His judgment upon him who felt no sorrow for the deed he had committed. Instantly Cradocus dropped down dead, and the earth opening beneath his feet his body was carried to the devil, whom he had served. Then S. Beuno looked at the heart-broken parents, and he pitied them. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he knelt and entreated God for His own honour and glory to give back their child to them in life and health. Then joining the body of Winefride to the severed head, he covered both with his cloak, and returned to the altar.

The holy Mass went on. Amidst the tears and sighs of the people Jesus was offered up in sacrifice for sin, and then S. Beuno motioned the parents of Winefride to follow him to where they had laid her lifeless body.

Then, with fervent prayer, he raised the cloak, and the maiden rose as if she had only been to sleep, the light of life and holy joy shining on her face. Round her neck there was a white circle no larger than a thread, which remained always, in testimony of the wonder God had worked for her.

Holy as her life had been, Winefride grew daily in likeness to her divine Spouse. She loved nothing but to learn of Him, and at His sacred Name her eyes would fill with happy tears of love, and she begged to be solemnly veiled, as the custom of those days was for those who had given themselves for ever to the service of God.

At length it was made known to S. Beuno that he should leave the spot where he had laboured for God, and that Winefride should collect there other virgins like herself, to guide souls in heavenly things. When he told this to her, the maiden was very sad, and wept bitterly at the thought of parting with him who had taught her all she knew of God's

service, but S. Beuno led her by the hand to the miraculous fountain where she had once been martyred, and spoke to her of what was the Divine purpose. He told her then that those stones which were still stained with the colour of her blood, should never lose their crimson tinge; that any one who asked in her name help, in suffering of body or mind, should receive an answer to their petition; and then, leading her back to the church, he bade her found there a convent for the honour of Almighty God, Who had showered His favours upon her. Winefride still wept. "Ah, I am now left as a weak, silly sheep amongst wolves, with no one to defend me," she cried, but S. Beuno answered not. Raising his hand, he blessed her once more, and begun his journey.

Her only comfort now, was to obey his slightest command, so the sorrowful maiden began to search out some others who should dwell with her in the practice of prayer and good works.

Her government of this community was

wonderfully wise—with great firmness, she united a spirit of gentleness and love, and thus her subjects obeyed her willingly, and were led onward by her holy example.

S. Winefride's fame began to be noised about Wales—many flocked from distant parts to receive her instructions, many obtained the cure of their diseases, by bathing in the water of the holy well, returning home filled with ardent desires to be more closely united to God. For seven years the Saint remained in the convent she had founded; then by the guidance of Heaven, she journeyed to another spot, where she was received into a monastery of holy sisters, and elected abbess in place of one who died at the time of Winefride's coming amongst them. Here she lived a life of marvellous prayer and penance, always teaching those she governed to keep their eyes fixed upon the example of Christ, and after the lapse of years, God called her to the reward of her love and fidelity, and having received the help of the last Sacraments, she passed sweetly

and peacefully from earth to heaven on the 3rd of November, which day is now kept as her festival.

Many pages might be filled with the account of the miracles worked at S. Winefride's well—the blind, the infirm, the leprous, have been healed by the water which first gushed forth at God's command.

Faith in miraculous cures is weak, in these our days, yet there are even now constant pilgrimages to the holy well, where health and blessing are still granted through the intercession of the Virgin-Martyr of Wales.

“Almighty and everlasting God, we humbly beseech Thee that blessed S. Winefride may obtain for us, such spiritual and temporal benefits as are expedient for Thy holy service, and our eternal salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son. Amen.”





## S. Agatha, V.M.

**I**N the days when the Emperor Decius reigned, there dwelt in the City of Catania, in Sicily, a Christian maiden named Agatha. Quintianus had been made king over the island, and when he heard of the great beauty of the maiden, he gave orders that she should be brought before him, and he tempted her with flattery and gifts to love him, but without success.

Then Quintianus sent for a wicked woman who dwelt in the city, and gave Agatha into her hands, promising that if she should subdue her, and make her obedient to his will, the reward should be great.

For three-and-thirty days Agatha was kept

in the house of Frondisia, but though they tried flattery and persuasion, unkindness and persecution, she remained firm in her love to Christ. So the woman sought Quintianus at last, and said—"It would be easier to dissolve the rocks, and cause them to flow like water, than to conquer this girl and subdue her will."

The ruler was very angry then, and, commanding Agatha to be brought to him, he cried,

"Who art thou, audacious girl?"

"I am the servant of Jesus Christ," she replied.

Then Quintianus answered—

"Give up thy faith, or I will have thee tortured."

To which Agatha responded—

"If thou shouldest throw me among wild beasts, the power of my God can make them gentle as lambs; if thou shouldest tear my flesh with scourges, the Holy Spirit within me would render thy tortures harmless; and if thou shouldest light a fire to consume me, the angels could quench it with dew from heaven."



Then the tyrant ordered Agatha to be bound, and scourged severely with rods, and further he commanded two of his slaves to tear asunder her bosom with iron shears ; and still she did not murmur, only saying, " Shame to thee that thou shouldest treat me so." They carried her then to a dark dungeon, and in the silence of midnight there came to her a venerable-looking man, bearing in his hand a vase of ointment—it was the holy Apostle S. Peter, and the youth who walked before him was one of the angels, but Agatha knew it not ; and such a glorious light filled the prison, that the soldiers fled in terror, leaving the door open. One of them cried to S. Agatha, " Arise, and escape !" but she refused to fly from the crown of martyrdom.

S. Peter drew near, and said—" I am come to heal thee, my daughter."

Agatha drew her veil more closely over her wound, and replied—

" If it is the Will of my Lord that I should be healed, He will Himself heal me."

But when the apostle said he had come from Christ to minister to her, Agatha received his help, and with the heavenly ointment he restored her breast and healed the wounds which the stripes had made in her body, and then disappeared, while the maiden knelt and thanked Christ for His mercy.

Soon after, Quintianus sent for Agatha to be brought to him, and, seeing her healed, he cried—

“Who hath restored thee?”

“He Whom I believe in, and to Whom I have given my love, has sent His Apostle to heal my wounds,” was the maiden’s reply.

Then Quintianus ordered a great fire to be kindled, and the Saint was bound hand and foot and flung into it; but that moment so terrible an earthquake shook the city, that the people implored him to desist from tormenting the Christian virgin, lest worse things should befall them.

So, half-scorched, and in terrible pain, Agatha was once more taken back to her dun-

geon, where she prayed so earnestly that she might see the glory of God, that her pure soul was released, and ascended to heaven, where she lives in the presence of Jesus, for Whom she suffered, rejoicing for evermore.





### S. Lucy, B.M.

**A** NOBLE and virtuous girl, whose name was Lucy, dwelt in the city of Syracuse with her widowed mother, who had instructed her carefully in the truths of Christianity ; she did not, however, know that the child had early dedicated herself to Christ

Many a youth in that country admired the beauty of Lucy, and tried to win her love in vain, and one of these would send her letters, in which he said that it was the great beauty and brightness of her eyes which caused his admiration. Lucy thought over the words of her Lord, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out," and fearing lest her eyes should be an occasion of sin to this young man, she called

for a knife, and unhesitatingly took out her sparkling eyes, sending them upon a dish to her lover, with these words: "Thou hast here what thou didst long for; now I beseech thee leave me in peace." The youth was both astonished and deeply grieved; but the firmness and courage of the holy girl had made so great an impression upon his heart, that he became a Christian, and ever after practised virtue and piety.

But God did not purpose that Lucy should remain without sight, and one day, when she knelt in prayer, her eyes were restored to her, more beautiful than ever.

The mother of this young Saint had long suffered from some illness, and Lucy entreated her to go on a pilgrimage to the tomb of S. Agatha, by whose intercession, and the power of Christ, she would surely be healed; so they journeyed together to Catania, and, while praying there, Lucy had a vision of the martyred saint, surrounded by a company who promised her the recovery of

her mother, and the special blessing of Heaven upon herself and her native city.

When Lucy regained consciousness, after her vision, she found her mother healed, and then she begged to be released from the promise which had been made for her at fourteen years of age to become the wife of a rich and noble pagan youth of Syracuse.

Her mother was troubled at the request, especially as Lucy asked permission to expend her dowry upon the poor; but she said—"My child, thou shalt have thy will, only wait until my death before thou distributest our possessions, lest I die a beggar."

Lucy smiled, and said—"Oh! my mother, God values little what we give Him when it is no longer useful to ourselves," and at these words the mother replied, "Then do as thou wilt." So the holy maiden sold all they had, and gave money to the poor and suffering, and when the young man to whom she had been early betrothed saw this, he no longer desired to espouse her, but went and denounced her to

the governor as a Christian. Lucy was soon summoned before Pascasius, and commanded to deny Christ, and when she refused, he ordered her to be taken to a place where bad people resorted, who would do her harm. But it pleased the Almighty to work a miracle for the deliverance of this young servant, for, as the men attempted to drag her away, she became perfectly immovable. Ropes were brought and fastened to her legs and arms, oxen were attached to them, but the slight form of Lucy remained still in the same spot, in spite of the strength of animals and men, and when Pascasius saw this he ordered a great fire to be lighted round her, so that she might be burned to death. However, Lucy prayed in the midst of the flames, and they did not even singe a hair of her head, so the governor commanded one of his servants to pierce her throat with the point of his sword, and thus she passed to the reward of her martyr's crown, and to rest in the love of her Divine Spouse, for Whom she had given up her innocent life.

The body of S. Lucy was buried by Christians upon the very spot where she suffered and died, and soon afterwards a church, bearing her name, was erected there, to the praise of Almighty God, Whose grace had enabled her to triumph over every temptation and trial, and remain "faithful unto death."







### S. Dorothy, Martyr.



ABOUT a year before the martyrdom of S. Agnes, another young and holy girl suffered death for the sake of Jesus Christ, by the command of the Emperor Diocletian.

This was S. Dorothy, who died upon the 6th of February in the year 303.

This maiden was very beautiful, and perhaps it was for this reason that Theophilus wished to marry her; but she refused him, because he was a pagan and did not believe in the Christian faith. When this young man found that Dorothy would not take him for a husband he resolved to have his revenge; and in those dreadful times it was easy to be revenged on

any one by simply telling the emperor that he was a Christian. So the maiden was quickly seized, and cast into a dungeon, and afterwards dragged before the governor of the city to answer the charge made against her.

Dorothy knew that some terrible sentence would follow ; she knew that she might be devoured by wild beasts, or burnt, or tortured on the cruel rack, but she never wavered in her answer. Yes, she was a Christian virgin, a servant of Jesus Christ.

Then she was threatened with death and tempted to serve the heathen gods, but she only said meekly, that death would unite her with Jesus Christ, with Whom there was eternal joy, and in Whose garden flowers and fruit grew which could never wither or decay.

The governor did not at once condemn her to death—there was a sort of pity even in his hard, wicked heart for one so young—but he had her taken back to her dungeon, and there he sent two sisters who had once been Christians but had denied their God, that they

might persuade her to yield as they had done, and serve false gods.

But when they entered her prison Dorothy reproved them severely, and spoke so earnestly of the joys of heaven which they had given up, that their hearts were touched, and falling at her feet, they begged her to pray for the pardon of their sins, and went away declaring themselves publicly to be Christians.

The governor was violently angry, and ordered the sisters to be burned in Dorothy's presence, and while their torments lasted she encouraged them by her holy words to be brave.

Then came Dorothy's turn to be tortured, and afterwards she was executed, declaring with her last breath, that she loved and believed in Christ alone. An hour had scarcely passed after her glorious soul had gone to God, when a strange miracle occurred to convert the wicked lover of Dorothy. As she had stood in the presence of the governor and spoken of the unfading fruit and flowers of the heavenly garden, Theophilus listened, and as she was

taken to her execution he mockingly asked her to send him some of that wondrous fruit from Paradise. Dorothy raised her heart to God, then, looking at Theophilus, replied gently, "Within an hour I will send you apples and roses from Paradise."

Theophilus tried to laugh, but he was strangely uneasy, and instead of going to see the Christian maiden beheaded, he left the crowd and joined a party of youths in feasting and rejoicing.

So, as we have said, Dorothy went home to God, and before an hour had passed, a youth entered that banqueting-room and placed a jewelled dish of apples and roses before Theophilus.

They were like no fruit of earth, so perfect was their beauty, besides, it was not the season for apples or roses. "How do you bring us this fruit?" cried the pagan youth; to whom the answer came from the heavenly messenger, "The holy martyr Dorothy sends these apples and roses from Paradise."

Theophilus trembled, but God's grace had triumphed over the darkness of his soul; he rose from the feast, went to the governor, and declared his belief in the Christian's God; that night he, too, was a martyr for the same holy faith. The body of Dorothy is kept in a church of Rome bearing her name, and her memory is venerated as one of the many who gave their lives up gladly for God and truth. May we—though not called to die by the sword as she did—give ourselves up as generously to suffering, to false accusation, to bitter mockery, if it comes to us, that, bearing our little cross for the love of Jesus, we, too, may win a heavenly crown.





## S. Barbara.

**D**URING the reign of the Emperor Maximin, there dwelt in Nicomedia a young maiden named Barbara, whose father, like most of the inhabitants of that town, was an idolater. God's truth had forced its way through the darkness of many souls, and men feared it as now, in later days, they fear the one true faith, which throws its strong clear light on sin, and discovers its hideousness. And the father of Barbara, in his dread of Christianity, enclosed his daughter in a tower, with only her mother and their servants for companions, believing that thus he should shut out the danger which he thought so great; but the power of the Almighty can conquer all obstacles, and thus

He caused a priest named Vallus to stay for a time near the dwelling of Barbara, who instructed her in the Christian religion and gave her the Sacrament of Baptism.

Before very long, the idolatrous father learned that his child was a Christian. Entering her room one day, he noticed that a window had been lately placed between the two which had always been there, and he inquired why this was done, and whether there had not been sufficient light in the room. "I have had the window made for a good reason," said Barbara, "It is to remind me that there are three lights which illumine heaven—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the three persons of our great and glorious God."

At these words the father was violently enraged, and would have killed his daughter had she not escaped—not through fear of dying for Christ, but that she might save her parent from committing so great a crime. Flying to an adjoining mountain, she hid herself there, sometimes in the wet and dreary caverns,

sometimes in an abandoned mine; but her cruel father at last discovered her retreat and took her back to Nicomedia.

She was summoned before the governor, who ordered her to be tortured, so that in her pain she should give up Christianity; but after inflicting many terrible sufferings upon her, through which she remained firm in her faith and holy love, he condemned her to have her head cut off. The wicked father's heart was so full of enmity against the Christian religion, that he had lost all natural affection for his daughter—he hated her then with a fierce, cruel hatred, and seizing her with his own hands, dragged her back to the mountain and executed the sentence of death which had been passed; her head lay at his feet, separated from her body, by his own violence, yet even then he felt neither shame nor sorrow. God's vengeance was soon to overtake the murderer, for as he descended the mountain, a thunder-bolt fell and killed him on the spot, and no trace of his body was ever discovered. Some



short time after, Maximin met with a similar death, as a punishment from Heaven, for his cruelty to the young Christian maiden.

When Barbara knew that her last moment had come, when for an instant she could pray to Him in Whose strength she had borne torture, and was ready to meet death, her petition was for others. She begged of God that those who loved her name and remembered her martyrdom, might obtain pardon for their sins, and the grace of receiving the Holy Communion before their souls should pass into His presence, and a Heavenly voice replied, "My daughter—your prayer is heard." It is for this reason that this holy virgin and martyr is specially invoked by all who keep before them the thought of death, so that S. Barbara's prayers to Almighty God may secure to them the help of the last Sacraments, in spite of any danger or difficulty with which they may be surrounded. "From thunder and tempest, from sudden and unprepared death, deliver us, and—S. Barbara, pray for us."



### S. Cyr.

**D**URING the time when Christians were being so cruelly persecuted by Domitian, a noble lady named Julitta, with her two maid-servants and her little son Cyr, went for safety to Seleucia. But the governor there was as bitter in his hatred of God's people as the prefect of Iconium, so that Julitta could not stay, but passed on to Tarsus in Cilicia. When she entered that city Alexander saw her, and gave orders that she should be seized ; and so with her little child in her arms this lady was dragged before the governor.

Her two maid-servants were so alarmed at her danger that they ran away and hid them-

selves, while she, the daughter of kings, stood as a prisoner before the cruel Alexander, answering to all his questions only these few words, "I am a Christian." This made the judge very angry, and he ordered the child to be taken from her while she was cruelly beaten.

It was not easy to tear the little Cyr from his mother; he was but three and a half years old, and he kept stretching out his arms to her so pitifully that every one was moved with compassion. Even Alexander held the child upon his knee and tried to pacify him, but Cyr struggled to get to his mother, and scratched the face of the cruel judge in his efforts to free himself, and when Julitta continued to cry out, "I am a Christian," he called out also with all the strength of his childish voice, "I am a Christian," and no words or threats could silence him. Then Alexander, in a furious rage, took Cyr by the foot and dashed him so violently to the ground that he was instantly

killed, and all the place was sprinkled with his blood.

The remorse and disappointment of the governor at the murder of this innocent little child made him more than ever angry with Julitta, and he had her tortured with the greatest cruelty, and commanded that her head should be struck off and the body of Cyr should be carried out of the city and thrown where the bodies of wicked men were usually cast. When Julitta saw the death of her child she thanked God for letting him become so early a martyr for the faith of Christ, and as she was led to execution she blessed and praised Him for granting Cyr a place in His heavenly kingdom, and begged that the same grace should be given her.

The martyrdom of little S. Cyr took place about the year 304, and his body, with his mother's, was buried secretly in a field near the city, by the maid-servants, who came to secure them unknown to Alexander. His

relics were brought from Antioch many years later by the Bishop of Auxerre, and have been enshrined in different places in France, where many of the monasteries and churches have been placed under the protection of his name.





## S. Cyril.

**T**HIS boy-Saint and martyr had early received the grace of the Christian faith, although his father was still one of the idolaters of Cappadocia. Cyril would not adore these false gods, and his refusal made his father so angry that, after treating him with great cruelty, he turned him out of doors.

The governor of that part heard what had happened, and issued an order for Cyril to be brought before him. He had been told that the child was constantly uttering the holy Name of Jesus, and that his father's anger had been powerless to silence him; so now, trying to win Cyril by caressing him most

affectionately, the governor assured him he ought to hate that Name, instead of loving it, and promised him that if he was obedient he should be reconciled to his father, and regain all that was his inheritance.

Many people older than Cyril would perhaps have been tempted to hesitate: the cruel acts of persecution in those days were so well-known, that Christians had reason to understand what would befall them in refusing obedience to the governors of those heathen cities; but this brave boy did not tremble, he answered boldly that he would willingly suffer for Christ—willingly give up the riches of the world for those of heaven. We may be sure that Cyril could not have felt and answered thus by his own strength—it was God who spoke by him, and gave him heavenly strength to meet the danger which was near. The judge still thought he should conquer, and, as kindness had failed, he was going to try what fear would do, so he ordered the boy to be bound and carried away, as if he was about to

be executed, but he privately said that he was only to be frightened. So Cyril was dragged before a blazing fire, into which they threatened to throw him ; but he did not shrink from suffering, and declared as bravely as before that he was ready to die for Jesus, whose Name he loved so much ; and then they took him back to the governor, saying they could do nothing with Cyril.

The judge said to him, " My boy, you have seen both fire and sword. If you are wise you will escape them, and return to your house and fortune."

That was his last chance of escape, but Cyril was not afraid. " I fear neither the sword nor the fire," he answered. " God will receive me : put me quickly to death, that I may go to Him."

Those who stood by felt sorry for this child, and admired his faith and courage so much, that they could not help shedding tears ; but he bid them rejoice, because of the heavenly treasures he was going to possess, and then



he died by the sword—still courageous, still speaking the holy Name with his last breath ; and thus his pure soul passed from earth to join the “ noble army of martyrs in heaven.”





### S. Zita.

**I**N a little mountain cottage not far from the city of Lucca in Tuscany, the holy servant Zita spent her earliest childhood. Her parents were very poor and she endured a good many hardships, but she was always happy and patient because her delight was in God, and no poverty or trouble can separate us from Him. When she was twelve years old, Zita had to go out to service, and her father obtained her a place in the palace of a noble family in Lucca, named Fatinelli, where she remained for the rest of her life. No doubt it was hard for the little girl to learn the duties of a servant, and she felt sad at being separated from her parents

and her cottage home, but she set to work to do what was pleasing to God, and prayed more than ever for His help and care. From her babyhood, Zita's heart had been full of pity for every one in sorrow or want, and it had caused her great pain to have no means of helping others because of the poverty in her own home, but now that she began to earn money she only spent just what kept her decently in clothes, and all the rest went to those who were worse off than herself. Every day she gave her own food to beggars, eating any scraps that she could get from what was left in the kitchen, and it seemed as if it was impossible for her to refuse any one who asked alms for the love of God. One day a poor pilgrim came to the door begging for food and water. Zita had nothing to give, but suddenly a thought entered her mind, and she bid him wait while she took a large copper vessel to the fountain to get him water. As she returned, she made over it the sign of the Cross, and asked the poor wanderer to drink, and he

declared it was no longer water, but the sweetest wine he had ever tasted. This fountain is shown at Lucca now by the name of "S. Zita's well."

The palace of the Fatinelli was close to the church of S. Fridian, and Zita rose early each morning so that she might be present at holy Mass without neglecting any of her duties, and there she might be seen wrapt in prayer until the moment it was proper for her to return to her daily work. This pious young servant was so anxious to do every common action for God, that she kept her mind turned to Him in all she did from morning until night, making her work a continual prayer, and as she had taken the Blessed Virgin as a model of perfection, she loved to form pictures in her mind of Mary in the cottage of Nazareth, busy in household duties like herself, and yet always united to Jesus Christ by love. If it was sometimes hard to obey her employers, Zita remembered how Mary submitted to S. Joseph—if it happened that her fellow-servants treated her with

ridicule or unkindness, Zita remembered Jesus bearing contempt in silence, and thus she became more and more like the holy ones of whom she thought so constantly, and every day the grace in her soul grew stronger.

The remembrance of the Passion of Christ gave Zita a great thirst for suffering, and besides mortifying her passions and inclinations she was led by God to impose many penances upon herself. Frequently she fasted, more frequently she slept upon the brick floor or a hard board, and she wore a rough cord round her waist which chafed her skin. All this was good, but it would have been worthless to our Lord if Zita had forgotten her duty to her master in love to the poor, and love of prayer and penance; but those who watched her life have said that she was always diligent and desirous to please, and ready at any time to assist her fellow-servants, never making a difficulty about what she was asked to do, but keeping that spirit of gentle meekness which she had learned from Jesus and Mary.

In her master's palace there was one solitary place which no one used, where Zita loved to spend whole nights in prayer, and how near God came to her in these hours we may hardly venture to imagine, but occasionally one of the family passing the door, saw brightness like the sunshine coming from it, which they felt sure could only proceed from the divine light of a heavenly presence.

This holy servant of God also visited the church late at night, when her day's work was done, and there in a retired corner she would kneel and adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

About ten miles from Lucca there stood a church which people feared to visit, because of the war then raging, as it was a solitary place where there had occurred several robberies and murders. Here Zita went one night to visit her Lord, but when she reached the place, the church doors were closed and barred. Then she prostrated herself outside and began to pray, but her long walk had wearied her and

she fell asleep until day dawned, when awaking she found the candle she had brought was lighted and burning and the doors of the church opened.

At sunrise the parish priest and some other persons saw Zita praying inside the church, but knowing that the doors had not been unlocked they declared it to be a miracle.

In these nightly visits to church, Zita once remained such a length of time in prayer that daylight began to enter the windows of the church. Suddenly she remembered that she had to bake bread that morning, and it was then too late to begin. She hurried home directly and went to the flour-chest, but there she saw a number of loaves all kneaded ready for the oven. While they were baking, Zita went to her mistress to thank her for having this work done for her, but no one in the house knew anything of it, and it was evident that the loaves had been kneaded by no human hand.

Zita's desire was to avoid praise and esteem,

and for this purpose she often spoke of her own faults very frankly and tried to excuse the failings of others, yet when any of her companions did wrong she told them gently of their sin, and tried to influence them to amend their lives.

Until the age of sixty, the Saint passed her days in this holy simple life, and then she was seized with low fever which lasted some time before she could be persuaded to rest in her bed. At last she was obliged to lie down in weakness for a few days, during which she prepared for death by receiving the last Sacraments, and then her soul passed away to heaven, mourned for by the family she had served so long and by all the poor of Lucca, who had reason to bless the name of Zita. As she expired a star was seen to hover over the city, and many miracles occurred at the tomb of the holy servant, who had risen from obscurity and poverty to shine as a saint in the kingdom of heaven.





## S. Monica.

**T**HE early Church had suffered terrible persecution and humiliation for several centuries at the time when S. Monica was born, in the year 332, and although there was a period of peace just then, her parents knew its uncertainty so well, that they took unusual care to train their little daughter to place her hope in the life which should be eternal, and to despise all earthly joy, which would only disappoint her.

Besides having a good father and mother, S. Monica speaks of the care and pious training of her nurse, who watched over her very strictly, and thus preserved from evil influence or example, the child showed early a

great love for God. When she was still quite a little thing, Monica would run away to the church, when no one was looking, and would be found kneeling in some quiet corner, with folded hands and downcast eyes, perfectly happy in the presence of Jesus. At times, in the midst of her games, she would leave her young playmates, to get a few moments' prayer under the shadow of some tree, and soon she would forget everything in the love of God, and stay wrapt in devotion until they sought and roused her. Very often she would rise in the night, and, kneeling on the ground, say the prayers her mother had taught her; and thus God, from her infancy, led her to love that union with Himself, which grew wonderfully strong in later years, and which gave her strength to do great things for Him.

Monica had an intense love for the poor, frequently concealing a part of her own meals that she might relieve some beggar at the door; she took a special interest, too, in the sick and wandering, and would direct

them to her father's house, and then wash their feet with her little hands, honouring Jesus Christ in these His suffering servants.

Her nurse accustomed the child to mortify herself in many ways, never allowing her to drink even a drop of water excepting at the hour for her regular meals, no matter how great might be her thirst; thus she hoped to accustom Monica to practise self-denial, which should increase with her growth, and fit her to follow Christ in the way of the Cross. Although there was so much holiness and sweetness in this little girl's early life, she was not free from faults, and one of these she often spoke of afterwards with great sorrow. It was the custom to allow girls, as they grew older, to see a little to the management of the house, and so, when Monica was of a suitable age, she was given the task of going every day to the cellar for wine, to be used by the household. It happened that, in thoughtlessness and for amusement, she began to put her lips to the wine, just to taste it—more from the

childish pleasure of doing forbidden things than because she liked its flavour ; however, from taking merely a sip, she went on to take more, until she would drink a small cupful every time she went to the cellar. A servant was always with her, who of course saw what she did, but who did not inform her nurse or parents of this fault ; however, one day when Monica had annoyed her, this woman in her anger taunted and reproached her with secretly drinking wine in the cellar. The young girl's face flushed with shame, and her heart was filled with compunction, and she set to work to correct herself, never again tasting anything but pure water.

This fault was, perhaps, by God's grace, the beginning of that love of mortification which was hers through life, and it taught her to be very humble and distrustful of herself, and thus led her to depend upon a higher strength whenever temptation came in her way.

Like many of the other towns of Africa, Monica's birthplace was full of the spirit of

heresy and schism, and, when she was about eighteen years old, such public crimes and disturbances existed, that the emperor interfered, and forbade any one to profess openly this heresy. Then the town, like many others, returned to the Catholic faith, and the Saint must have rejoiced in seeing her birthplace set free from error, especially as it is thought her baptism and First Communion took place at that time. When Monica was a little older, her parents gave her in marriage to a husband who did not love or serve God, and a most unhappy life began, for she had to dwell in the house of her mother-in-law, who was a woman of a violent and jealous disposition. The trials which S. Monica endured were very great—even the servants spoke untruthfully about her, and took evil reports of her actions to her husband and his mother; but God gave her the love of suffering, which helped her to bear everything with courage, and seek her only joy in prayer. In the year 354 her first child was born, who received the name of

Augustine, and regarding whom God gave her a secret assurance of the holiness of his future life if she taught him from his infancy to be faithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Doubtless it was this which inspired S. Monica with such faith during the years when that son wandered from God, and she prayed so earnestly and so trustingly for his conversion.

Two other children were given to S. Monica, and although their father was a pagan, and their relatives and servants set them no good example, the prayers of their holy mother obtained for them the grace of becoming faithful servants of God.

From the earliest infancy of Augustine, S. Monica endeavoured to fill his little heart with the thought of God's goodness and holiness. It was not then the custom to baptize children directly, but she took the first opportunity of putting his name upon the list of catechumens, which means those who were being prepared to receive the grace of baptism. Knowing that her child would presently be

tempted to follow the example of his father, and that even her care could not shield him from evil influence as he grew up, Monica tried to form his conscience so that he might early learn to distinguish right from wrong; and she especially loved to talk to him of the joy of heaven, bidding him raise his eyes to the sky, as she tried to picture to him the peace and rest which they enjoyed who were dwelling for ever in the presence of God. To this she added lessons about the crib in which the great God humbled Himself to become a little child—of the Cross on which He died a death of shame and suffering, that we might be freed from the eternal punishment our sins deserved. During the time of S. Augustine's childhood he was seized with such violent pain and illness that his life was supposed to be in danger, and in his fear he thought of God and of eternity, and begged earnestly to receive the grace of baptism. His mother longed for it as ardently as he, and entreated that he might not die without the sacrament being

given him; and immediately the pain and danger lessened, and the child grew well, so that his baptism was not thought of any more until many years after. As Augustine grew older, S. Monica knew that she must allow him to leave her, to begin his education; so she placed him in a town not many miles distant, trusting that by God's grace he might not forget all the lessons of virtue and piety which she had tried to teach him. But although the lad advanced rapidly in his studies, he began by degrees to fall into sinful habits, and yet his conscience was not dead—he often thought of his mother's early training, and his heart was full of remorse, but yet he would not turn to God, and begin a better life, for he persuaded himself that he could do that at some later time. Although God permitted this great sorrow to fall upon S. Monica, He gave her the joy of seeing her husband give up his unbelief, and put himself under Christian instruction, just at the time she had been married to him



seventeen years, during which she had prayed for his conversion, and not long afterwards he died a calm and pious death, after having been baptized in the faith of Christ's Church. Then S. Monica vowed to belong only to God, and never to have another husband, and she received the dress which in those times the Church gave to widows who intended to pass the rest of their lives in retirement from the world. The love of the poor had been very strongly rooted in her heart as a little child, and now that she was free she devoted herself more and more to waiting upon them, and nursing those who were sick in the hospital. Besides this, S. Monica sought out little homeless orphan children, whom she tried to train for God as she had trained Augustine. Wherever there was sorrow or suffering, the Saint, who had endured so many sorrows herself, was ever ready to give comfort and help.

The rest of her time was given entirely to God, and He rewarded her with a great deal of His love and consolation. Augustine's sinful life

was not unknown to his holy mother, and she mourned continually over his state ; but her trust in the Almighty was so strong, that she prayed more and more for his conversion, believing that he would one day return to God, Whom he had so much offended.

For years she offered up her tears, her sufferings, her supplications to the Almighty, and then the answer came, and Augustine renounced the unbelief and sin into which he had fallen, and gave his heart and life entirely to God. S. Monica was happy then ; her son was baptized, he was only desirous of devoting the rest of his days to the service of his heavenly Father ; and when he desired to live in some retired spot, where the world's temptations should not assail him, she was ready to accompany him anywhere. When Augustine had been following a course of sin, he had fled from Africa to Italy ; there his mother had gone also, and there he had been converted by her prayers ; but when he proposed to return to Africa, she at once prepared for the journey.

They started upon the route, and, as they rested at different stages on the way, the mother and son would talk of heaven as they had done long years before, when he was a little innocent child ; but Augustine noticed that she seemed to have a more intense longing to be set free from this world, and it seemed to him that her pure soul could not long bear to be separated from that peace and joy which had ever been her one hope, her first thought.

Only a few days later, S. Monica was attacked by fever, and God made known to her that her end was near, and that she would never return to Africa. For more than a week she suffered greatly ; but many heavenly favours were granted her, although one immense sacrifice was required of her. She longed to receive the Holy Eucharist, but the sickness, which continued violently, made it impossible for this desire to be granted, and all the help they could give her was to place a cross in her hand, upon which she gazed lovingly until her eyes closed in death.

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It is said that, just at the last, a lovely little child was seen to enter the room, who approached the bedside of the Saint, and pressed a kiss upon her heart: it was Jesus, the Holy Child, Who called her thus to come with Him to the home He had prepared for her in heaven, and at the touch of His sacred lips she bowed her head and died without a murmur or a sigh—in perfect peace.





### S. Lidwina.

**A**LTHOUGH the saints have usually had to bear a great deal of illness and suffering, it is S. Lidwina who is considered especially the patroness of the sick, on account of her perfect example of courage and patience during nearly thirty-eight years of pain.

She was a Dutch child, born at the town of Scheidam on the River Meuse, and although their ancestors had been noble, her parents were so poor at the time of her birth that her father had to support his family upon his earnings as a night-watchman. From a very little girl Lidwina had a special love for the Blessed Virgin, and could not pass the church which

contained her image without going in to say a Hail Mary at her dear mother's feet.

When she was about seven years of age Lidwina was sent every morning to carry breakfast to her brothers at school, and in passing the church-door she went in on her way home to say the favourite prayer. Once she stayed so long that her mother, Petronilla, scolded her because she thought the child had been idling, but Lidwina told her what she had done, and declared that while she was praying the Blessed Virgin had smiled on her, and after that Petronilla did not complain any more.

When Lidwina was still very young her great beauty, added to her talents, made several persons desire to marry her, but her mother objected because of her childish age, and the girl herself begged that she might be allowed to give all her heart to God. He saw fit to grant her desire, but the answer to her prayer came by suffering and pain.

In the winter-time, before she was fifteen

years old, Lidwina was skating on the ice with some of her companions, when one of them seized hold of her, thus causing her to fall on some blocks of rough ice, breaking one of the ribs on her right side. An abscess formed there, and Lidwina was worn out with pain, which nothing seemed to relieve. At last, one day when she was suffering more than ever, she sprang from bed and threw herself into her father's arms, and then the abscess broke, and it seemed as if she must die from exhaustion. But God's Will was not to remove her from the world. He meant her to live on for many years and be sanctified through suffering; which was at first very hard for a young, lively girl of fifteen years.

It used to make her unhappy, and she would beg those who visited her to think of something to ease her pain, for it cost her much before she grew to love suffering for the sake of Jesus. Her young friends would come and talk to her, looking so strong and merry that Lidwina cried bitterly over her own helpless-

ness, and wished with all her heart that she could get well. After a while she began to crawl about the house with the help of a stick, but then the use of her feet left her and she had to try crutches.

For the first two years they carried her at Easter to receive Holy Communion at the church, but afterwards her confessor brought it to her twice in the year, trying to turn her thoughts away from her own misery and fix them on Jesus in His Passion. He used to tell Lidwina that nothing else would give her any peace or teach her to submit to God's Will; however, she suffered such pain in her body that she seemed as if she could not think of Jesus at all until she had struggled long to obey the advice given her. This good priest taught her to divide the sufferings of Christ into seven parts, and at fixed times in the day and night to think of one of these subjects and pray much for the patience of the Saviour, and at last Lidwina became so accustomed to this rule that she could measure time by her



seven hours of prayer, and it began to make her own sufferings seem light when she remembered the burden which had pressed so heavily on Jesus.

For nineteen years the only food which the poor sufferer could take was part of a roasted apple or a little morsel of bread soaked in milk, and later on, even this was too much, and she swallowed only a very small quantity of wine mixed with water, or eat a little cinnamon or sugar.

At last Lidwina could neither turn nor move, but lay constantly on her back until she died ; burning fever wasted away her little strength, pain of every kind seemed sent to her, which no physician could relieve because it was caused by the hand of God. Her mother, too, died after the first eight years of Lidwina's illness, and she was without her care and sympathy ; but by that time the cross was becoming sweet to her, and she never murmured or longed for health.

Wishing to do some act of penance for the

relief of her mother's soul, the Saint wore a belt of sackcloth round her body, which she continued during all her sufferings until she died.

Sometimes visitors would leave little gifts of money for this poor creature, who had not the means of purchasing things which would help her to bear her sufferings, but she always gave them away to those who were in greater need than herself. At last, a nobleman who heard of her state, settled a small sum of money upon Lidwina's father, and he being relieved from the necessity of working, spent all the time he could in the church ; but several terrible accidents happened to him on account of his helplessness and age, and at last he was killed by a man, who threw him into a ditch, where he was drowned.

This was a great sorrow to Lidwina ; it proved that God had chosen her out to suffer, and she clung more closely to Jesus for her comfort, until at length she truly loved all that she had to bear.

Our Blessed Lord rewarded His servant by appearing to her sometimes in visions, and by permitting her to see her angel guardian many times with the cross upon his forehead, so that she might know him for an angel of light.

When she fell into any imperfections she was deprived of these heavenly visits until she had acknowledged her fault. One day her angel asked her if she was willing to bear her attacks of fever for the release of the souls of some of her friends in purgatory, and when she answered that she would willingly suffer as long as she lived, he said it should be so, and that many of those souls should be released in consequence.

Upon one Shrove Tuesday, Lidwina heard some men in the street indulging in sinful language, and she prayed that she might do penance for them by bearing a new pain, and God sent her a fresh suffering, which lasted until the following Easter.

Almost every night during twenty-four

years, the Saint was allowed to see, in a sort of vision, many sacred spots at a great distance from her home, and several times Christ entered her little cell surrounded by angels, lighting up the walls with a golden brightness.

Lidwina's great kindness to the poor increased continually, and more than once God gave her some miraculous help.

One of her brothers owed some money when he died, and Lidwina sold some things her mother had left her so that she might pay these debts, putting the sum in a purse and entrusting it to a relation. When the purse was returned to her she found there was just the same money in it which she had placed there, so she put it aside and called it the "Purse of Jesus," only using it in times of great want. This purse was never empty, and yet her alms to the poor were constant.

As years went on, the Saint's desire for Holy Communion became so great that she received it more and more frequently, finding in it her greatest help and happiness, and at

last it became her only support, for she could swallow no food.

Lidwina had always begged of her Lord that she might die alone, deprived of all comfort, so that she might more closely resemble Him in His death of desolation, and her desire was given her. Three or four times she had seen in her visions a beautiful rose-tree in Paradise, which her angel said would be in full bloom before her death. When she was allowed to see it with all its flowers blown, Lidwina knew that her sufferings were nearly ended. On the 4th of April, 1433, which was Easter Tuesday, her confessor went to see her, in the morning, and she begged then that no one who loved her would visit her during the day. As the time went on her pains grew more intense, and just about the hour of vespers she said to her little nephew Baldwin, who alone remained there, "Oh, my child! I wish my Master knew how ill I am."

Thinking she meant her confessor, the little

boy ran to fetch him, and in a few moments the priest was by her side, but she was dead ; she had been made like to Him Who had none to comfort Him.

No traces of that long illness of thirty-eight years were seen upon the face of Lidwina in death ; the freshness and sweetness of early youth had all come back to the wasted features, and a heavenly brightness hovered over her. She was buried in the church of S. John Baptist, at Scheidam, until the year 1615, when her remains were removed to a shrine in the church of S. Gudule, at Brussels, where many people prayed and received great benefits through her intercession.

Lidwina's early desire to belong wholly to God had been indeed granted her ; she was not called to do heroic works of mercy, to live the life of daily self-sacrifice in the holy habit of a religious ; *her* way to God lay along the rough and thorny path of pain and poverty and loneliness, but Jesus met her there, and turned her sorrow into joy, her suffering into

sweetness, until at length the cross she had borne so patiently on earth was changed into the glory of the crown, as her reward in heaven.





### S. Germaine Cousin.

**I**N a little French village not many miles from Toulouse, there dwelt a poor couple named Laurence and Mary Cousin, who, like the rest of their neighbours, had to toil hard for their daily bread. They had a child whom they baptized in the name of Germaine; but while she was still very young, her mother died, and with her father's second marriage, all her sorrows began. The little girl had been from her birth ailing and weakly, and was deprived of the use of her right hand and arm, and on this account her step-mother took a violent dislike to the poor child, treating her with much harshness, and by pretending that her bad health made her



dangerous as a companion for the rest of their family, she at last persuaded Laurence to send her out of the house and compel her to live as a little shepherdess by day, sleeping at night under a staircase in the stable.

The motherless child must have left her home with a heavy heart—in scorching sunshine or through frost and snow and rain she must tend the sheep; her food was only of black bread, nor had she as much of that as she could have eaten, and then when night came, instead of being welcomed home, she might only creep silently to her lonely bed on a heap of vine twigs. But though Germaine was only a little girl, God gave her the grace to understand that this unkind treatment could only happen by His permission, and that however hard it seemed, it was really the means He had chosen to make her love Jesus very much, and so whenever she felt sad, she turned her thoughts to the sufferings of the Saviour, and grew patient as she remembered that He had chosen her—a poor weak child—to bear contempt and hatred for His dear sake.

Putting before her the example of Christ, Germaine never gave angry answers to the reproaches of her parents—even when the neighbours called her a hypocrite, and said she was trying to be thought a saint, no angry flush rose to her pale cheek—she only offered all the pain to Jesus, and in return He gave her peace in her heart which no one could take away.

There was a small chapel on the moor where Mass was offered daily, and here little Germaine knelt whenever it was possible, and each great Festival and Sunday saw her receiving the Body and Blood of Christ with faith and love. At those times she was no longer sorrowful—all the unkindness of her step-mother, all the taunts of the villagers, were forgotten, and the little shepherdess was happy in the possession of Jesus, Who was everything to her. She did not go away and forget her Lord as so many of us do—as she watched her sheep or busied herself in spinning, she thought of Him still, and very often

she would kneel down before a rough cross which she had set up under a tree, and think of His sacred Passion. The motherless child was sure that Mary was always watching over her, and so she poured out all her griefs to that sweet heavenly Mother, whose love comforted her in her lonely life. Germaine knew what hunger was, but yet she sometimes found one poorer than herself with whom she would share her small allowance of coarse black bread, and she often got the other young shepherdesses to listen as she told them about Jesus. God showed His love for this girl in many unusual ways. When she wanted to go to Mass and there was no one to take charge of her sheep, she would plant her distaff in the ground, believing that her Father in heaven would not let them pass beyond it, and her simple faith was never unrewarded. One time when her step-mother heard that Germaine had been assisting her poorer friends with some food, she followed her to the moor in violent anger, and there she found the child

distributing scraps of bread to her hungry companions.

The woman rushed forward—but suddenly Germaine's lap was filled with the sweetest roses, instead of dry morsels of bread, and those who were present stood astonished and ashamed of their passion as they saw how God had Himself defended His humble little servant. The story passed from one to another—many began to be grieved at the way they had treated Germaine, and her father asked her to come back to her home, but the young shepherdess had found Jesus so close to her in her sorrows and sufferings that she could not give them up, but asked to be allowed still to keep to her solitary lodging in the stable on her bed of vine-twigs.

Sixteen years had passed since Germaine's troubles began—years in which she had grown in virtue and the love of God, and now she was ready for heaven. One summer's night she lay down on her poor bed as usual, but when morning came her sheep were not led

out upon the mountain side, and when some one noticed this and went to awaken Germaine they found her body lying as it were in a calm sleep, but her soul was with God and the angels. During the night two religious had been sheltering in a ruined castle close by, and these saw two angels clothed in white, pass along the road and enter the cottage of Laurence Cousin; the watchers were still gazing in surprise, when the angels came forth, but another was with them crowned with heavenly flowers. It was Germaine the poor shepherdess, who had exchanged the sorrows of earth for the eternal bliss of heaven.

Many people came to see the burial of the shepherdess of Pibrac, but nothing unusual occurred—she was laid in a common grave without even an inscription upon it, and thus her simple, holy life of twenty-two years seemed to pass away from the memory of man. Forty-three times summer and winter passed over the little village, no one spoke of Germaine, few knew anything of her, but God's

Will was now to bring her sanctity to light. When the sexton was digging a grave for one of her relations, he came upon a body still fresh and incorrupt—a little taper in one hand, the flowers on her breast scarce faded—her features bearing the mark of pain and disease, and her right arm withered. No one could recognize it at first—those forty-three years had brought many a change amongst the inhabitants of that French village, and few were left of those who had once known Germaine Cousin, but one of the elder people came to look, and recognized the young shepherdess, and then others began to tell what they could about her, and the devotion to her memory became so strong that her coffin was left uncovered. After a while, a lady of high rank objected to have this dead body near her place in church, and requested that it might be removed, but soon afterwards she was seized with severe illness, and her infant child took the complaint from her and lay at the point of death. The lady's husband suddenly remem-

bered what she had said about the body of Germaine, and he felt so sure that by her disgust she had offended God, that he entreated her to ask His pardon. She did so, and as she knelt in prayer the room was filled with light, and Germaine appeared, promising health for herself and for her child. Next day this lady went publicly to church, to atone for her conduct and to thank God and S. Germaine, and the holy body was then enclosed in a leaden coffin and placed in the sacristy. This was but the beginning of miracles, and as years went by and still the wonders worked at her tomb continued and increased, the whole history of her pure life was made known, and when years had passed, Germaine was pronounced one of the "Blessed." The still higher dignity of being a canonized saint is hers now, thus showing us that poverty, lowliness, and suffering, instead of being hindrances as some may think, are really helps to bring us very near to God on earth and fit us for the enjoyment of His presence in heaven.



### S. John Nepomucene.

**M**ANY hundred years ago, a little boy might have been seen running every morning to serve Mass at the Cister-tian abbey of a small market town in Bohemia, who was known to the neighbourhood by the name of John, and is familiar to us now as S. John Nepomucene, one of the saints and martyrs who are so dear to God.

As he grew older, his parents allowed this lad to study for the Church, and after he had been some time at the University of Prague, he filled several offices in that city, until in 1390 he was made a canon of the cathedral church.



Wenceslaus, who was then king, was a very bad man, and he began to think evil of his wife Sophia and suspect her of all kind of sins.

Now Sophia was a very pious queen, and she had chosen for her confessor "Master John" as he was called, because she knew he was very holy and would be able to show her how best to serve God, and at last Wenceslaus was so wicked as to go to him and ask him to tell what the queen had said to him in confession.

Every Catholic knows that although during the eighteen hundred years since Christ instituted the holy sacraments, there have always been people making and priests hearing confessions, there never was a priest who broke the law of the Church which forbids him revealing what is said to him when he is in the place of Christ to forgive sins.

There have been a few—a *very* few—priests who have not been good men, just as among the disciples there was one bad, like Judas ;

yet those who have committed other sins, who have even been so false as to renounce their holy faith, have never dared incur God's anger by breaking what is called "the seal" of confession.

So John Nepomucene, who was very holy, paid no heed to the wicked requests of Wenceslaus, and although he was threatened with punishment, it never made the least thought of yielding come into his mind, and when he had been imprisoned with the hope of frightening him into obedience to the king, he persisted in his refusal as strongly as before.

Wenceslaus was so angry that he would have thought no death too cruel for this holy priest, whom he hated with such bitterness, but he dared not kill him for refusing to reveal a confession, because great trouble would have fallen upon himself for such an outrage, and it would have brought all Christian kings and emperors to punish him for it; but he resolved to find some other excuse for ridding his

domain of Master John, and waited and watched until the opportunity came.

It would seem that God forewarned His servant of what would befall him, for in a sermon which he preached publicly in the city of Prague, he spoke of the calamities which were coming, and afterwards set out on a pilgrimage to a well-known shrine of our Blessed Lady at Boleslau, to make ready by prayer for what he might have to bear.

In the south-western part of Bohemia there was an old Benedictine abbot very near death, and Wenceslaus had determined when he was gone to turn the abbey-church into a cathedral, so that it might become the property of one of his favourite courtiers.

The abbot died, and his monks, after asking the opinion of John Nepomucene, elected another in his place so quickly that Wenceslaus had not time to carry out his plan, and, angry as he was, there yet came a kind of wicked pleasure into his heart because he

felt that he had now got the excuse he had been longing for of persecuting Master John.

So he was seized and stretched upon the rack, and cruelly tortured, the wicked king himself holding a burning torch to the martyr's side. Then they ceased for awhile and asked him once more would he tell what the Queen Sophia had confessed to him, but John was unmoved; he had heard and pardoned her sins in God's name, and no suffering, no torture, could ever bring them to the knowledge of men.

Then Wenceslaus gave orders that his hands should be tied behind his back, and his mouth kept open by a pointed piece of wood, and thus he should be taken through the streets and thrown over the bridge into the River Moldan.

The executioners obeyed, and John was dragged to his death; but God saw fit to glorify him in the eyes of the people who followed as he went along, for after life had

gone his holy body floated upon the water, while a miraculous light shone around his head.

The news soon spread through the city of Prague, and crowds gathered by the bank, and gazing upon the holy face, saw the light playing around it. Then the priests from the cathedral went in procession, bearing torches, and brought the holy corpse to the church, and countless miracles were worked at the tomb.

Three hundred years after his death the tomb of this martyr was opened, and his tongue had the fresh appearance of life, and this, added to many other proofs of his sanctity, caused S. John Nepomucene to be canonized. Every year, upon the 16th of May, when his festival comes round, let us pray to this dear, faithful Saint for the grace of silence; let us ask him to get for us the desire to be very silent about other people's faults, and to say nothing about any little good actions we have done ourselves; let us ask him to help us to understand how God

loves to see us watching our words, so that we may say nothing to displease Him, and then we shall begin to learn the lesson of holy silence which springs from the life and glorious death of S. John Nepomucene.





### S. John of God.

**Y**OUR history to-day is of one who had wandered away from God and fallen into evil ways of life, but who was suddenly converted by the preaching of a sermon, and became afterwards a very great saint.

S. John, surnamed "of God," was a native of Portugal, the son of very poor and lowly parents, and during his childhood he spent an innocent and devout life; but when in the year 1522 he enlisted in a company of foot-soldiers, he was led away by the example of bad companions and lost his fear of offending God.

This did not happen at once; it was by care-

lessness in things which seemed small, by laying aside devout practices and trusting in his own strength, unaided by the grace of God, that he became what he was, until the infinite mercy and love of Jesus touched his heart.

In the year 1536, the troop to which he belonged was disbanded, and so he went into Spain and obtained employment from a rich lady as her shepherd. As a little boy, John had been in the same occupation under the chief shepherd of a count in Castile, and perhaps returning to the old quiet life which had been his when he was good and innocent, might have brought some thoughts of God, some longing to be rid of the burden of sin which loaded him; certainly for the first time for many years, he began to think very seriously of changing his life and doing penance for his many offences against the Almighty. As his contrition deepened, John began to pray by day and night; continually grieving over the ingratitude he had shown to a God so good and merciful, and he longed to know



some way of making reparation by a life given up to the divine service. At length he resolved to leave the place and go to comfort the poor slaves in Africa; but on his way he fell in with a Portuguese gentleman, who had been sentenced to banishment, and who, with his wife and children, was then journeying to Ceuta, in Barbary, in the custody of the king's officers, and John felt so sorry for him that he went, too, and served him without any wages. When they reached Ceuta, this gentleman became so ill from the grief and trouble he had suffered, that he could do nothing to support his family, and John went out to work as a day-labourer, that he might earn money for them.

After this he returned to Gibraltar, where he turned pedlar, and the thought came into his mind, that if he sold little sacred pictures and books of devotion, it might be a way of working for God, so he obtained some, and succeeded so well that he opened a shop in the city of Granada. All these efforts to live a

good life and make up for his past neglect were very pleasing to God, Who was preparing for him graces of which he, as yet, knew nothing.

That year a very holy preacher and servant of our Lord, named John d'Avila, was preaching in Granada, and upon the festival of S. Sebastian, which is kept there always as a day of great rejoicing, John went to hear the sermon, and God, by the words of His Spirit, touched his heart with such intense love and sorrow, that he burst into tears, and, forgetting all around, cried aloud for mercy from Heaven. His suffering as he realized the love of Jesus and his own misery and sin was such that he ran through the streets like one mad, tearing his hair and groaning; his one thought was of God—God offended by himself—and he heeded not the crowd, who jeered and pelted him with sticks and stones, so that he returned home covered with blood and bruises.

Feeling that nothing he could do was too much to offer as penance, he parted with all

he had in the world so as to be absolutely without anything, and allowed himself to be called mad, indulging in many absurdities, so that he might meet with more contempt and ill-treatment. Some persons, moved to compassion, took him to the great preacher, who was shown by God that John would receive unusual graces, and having talked with him and heard the confession of all his life, promised to guide and help him in the future. For a time John persisted in feigning madness, so that he was taken up and kept in a mad-house, where they treated him severely, but he bore all with thankfulness as a just penance for past sin, until D'Avila told him he was sufficiently exercised in that method of humiliation.

John instantly obeyed, and became calm and grave, to the surprise of his keepers, and for a time he was allowed to assist with the sick, until he left the hospital altogether.

This strange conduct was permitted by God that he might quickly learn contempt for the

esteem of the world, and prepare his soul for those graces which were to follow, and although we are not asked to imitate him in this way of humiliation, there is not one of us who may not ask and long for that spirit of contrition, that hatred of himself, which led him to despise the favourable judgments we are apt to prize so dearly.

John next made a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadeloupe, to beg her intercession, and being resolved to devote himself to the relief of the poor, he began by selling wood in the market-place, so as to earn money to buy them food. His next step was to hire a house, where he might shelter the sick and needy, and this was the simple foundation of the "Order of Charity," which God has blessed in every country. All day long the holy man waited upon his sick patients, and at night he sought provisions for them and brought in fresh cases of distress, and at last people of the city began to help him with gifts, and the archbishop gave him several sums of money

and favoured the work with his special protection.

All this had been done without John having a thought of founding a religious order, but a bishop, who was visiting Granada and had some conversation with him, was so filled with esteem for his holiness and usefulness, that he bestowed on him the name of "John of God," and ordered him to wear a kind of religious habit.

There was a rich marquis who wished to find out if John had a true spirit of charity, so he disguised himself and came to beg alms, feigning to be in need, upon which he immediately received all the money which the Saint had in the house at that time. The marquis not only returned the sum he had been lent, but also bestowed upon him one hundred and fifty golden crowns, and while he stayed in Granada, no day passed upon which he did not send to his hospital one hundred and fifty loaves, four sheep, and six pullets.

On one occasion the hospital took fire, and

S. John carried most of the sick upon his own shoulders to places of safety, and although he passed through the flames continually, God gave His angels charge over him, and he was quite uninjured.

True charity is not bound up in one place or one good work, so John of God felt the same desire to assist suffering in every part of the country, and no one remained unrelieved whom it was in his power to assist, and he particularly loved to seek out public sinners with a crucifix in his hand, entreating them to be reconciled to the Saviour Who had died for them. Humiliations were still his great happiness, although he had ceased to seek them in extravagant ways. One day a woman called him a hypocrite, and he was so delighted that he gave her secretly a piece of money, on condition that she would go and repeat her abuse aloud in the crowded market-place.

After ten years of hard work John became ill. He had been the witness of a flood which was destroying the goods of many poor people,

and on seeing one person in danger of being drowned, he swam, in his long robe, to save him, at the risk of his own life.

After this he began to feel ill, but he concealed it, lest he should be forced to labour less and diminish his penances ; but he became so much worse that the news spread, and a noble lady came in her coach to visit him and see into the cause of his suffering. When she arrived, John was lying in his little cell, covered with a piece of an old coat, and having for a pillow a basket, in which he used to collect food for his hospital, while the poor people stood weeping over him. The lady sent privately a message to the archbishop, who despatched an order to the holy man to go with her to her house, that he might receive care and nursing.

During this illness they often read to him the Gospel history of the Passion of Christ, and John complained that while his Master drank gall and vinegar, he, a wretched sinner, was given broths and other things. The whole

city was begging that the Saint's life might be spared, but his work on earth was nearly done, and one day when the archbishop had said Mass in his room, heard his confession, and given him the last Sacraments, he died upon his knees, before the altar, being exactly fifty-five years old.

The clergy and nobles, the poor and the rich, clustered round the grave in which his body was laid to rest, and after many miracles had been wrought there, he was canonized as a saint. Though the life of John of God was one of active usefulness, he had a great love of prayer and contemplation, and was favoured by many raptures and visions; but neither the esteem of men nor the special love of God disturbed the deep humility of his heart, for it rested upon the foundation of perfect contrition—that contrition which effaced the stains upon his soul—so that, like Mary Magdalen, many sins were forgiven him because he “loved much.”





## S. Alexis.

**L**ONG centuries ago, in the days when Innocent the First was the Sovereign Pontiff, a rich senator of Rome was offering up prayers to God for the blessing of a son to bear his name and succeed to his wealth and position. Some years they prayed and waited, and then to this nobleman and his wife a child was born, whom they named Alexis.

The little boy seemed to be from infancy entirely devoted to God, and he grew daily more sweet, and humble, and pious, as time passed on. Being of a wealthy family, his clothing was rich and costly, but underneath the silk and gold he wore a rough hair-shirt,

and often wished that he could follow Jesus in poverty and suffering. In the world he appeared with a peaceful, smiling face ; but, upon his knees before the cross, he would weep for hours over his sins, and promise his whole life, and love, and service to Almighty God alone.

The father of Alexis wished him to marry when he had reached a proper age, and chose as his wife a maiden who was as virtuous and beautiful as she was noble—one whom none could see without admiration and love. Alexis was sad and perplexed ; never yet had he disobeyed his father, and his entreaties had been powerless to prevent the command ; but, with the memory of that vow offered to God, he dared not give affection to any human creature, and all that he could do was to pray to be helped and guided by Heaven. So the marriage-day drew on ; the ceremony was concluded amidst great pomp and rejoicing ; but Alexis had been inspired by God with a purpose which would preserve his vow unbroken, and he disappeared from the gay

assembly, and they sought him everywhere in vain. When the bride was questioned, she could only say, weeping, that her husband had but given her a ring of gold, a girdle of precious stones, and a veil of purple, and then, exclaiming "Farewell!" had hurried away.

For some days they sought Alexis, and finding it impossible to obtain tidings of him, his father sent messengers to all countries and parts of the world, while his mother spread ashes upon the earth, and sat down mourning, and the young bride took off her ornaments, wore the attire of a widow, and, darkening her windows, wept constantly.

All this time Alexis had not been unmindful of the suffering he was causing to those who loved him; but the voice of God sounded clearly in his ear, bidding him leave parents, and home, and all else, to follow Jesus, and he dared not linger, so, disguising himself in the dress of a pilgrim, he hurried away from his native town, and, getting into a little boat, soon reached the mouth of the River Tiber, and

then journeyed on to Mesopotamia, where he devoted himself to the service of the sick and the poor. He could not long remain unnoticed; because of his holy life and his marked devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and people began to call him a saint, upon which Alexis grew alarmed, lest he might become proud and uplifted; therefore he left the place, and embarked in a ship bound for Tarsus. But a great tempest rose, and after many days the ship was driven back to the mouth of the Tiber, and Alexis found himself once more near his home and friends. Then he thought that, as he was very much changed, no one in the city would know him again, so he resolved to go and live upon the charity of those who had formerly been his friends. He was approaching his father's house, when he saw him coming out, with several servants in attendance, and in humble words Alexis besought a refuge under his roof, and a few crumbs of bread. Euphemian looked at him, but did not know it was his son; yet his heart filled with pity

for the poor beggar, and he ordered his servants to take care of him, "For," said he, "my own son, Alexis, may be poor and homeless like this man."

The commands of Euphemian were not well obeyed, for instead of taking care of Alexis, they lodged him in a hole under the marble steps, where all who passed could look on his misery, and the servants, finding that he never complained, mocked at him, and treated him with contempt, throwing dirt at him, and pulling his hair. All these trials Alexis endured with patience, and many others, which tried him far more. It was hard to witness the distress of his beloved mother—to see his wife, whose chamber window was just above him, look under the steps, weeping there, and exclaiming, "Oh! my Alexis, why hast thou espoused me and left me?" but at such times, if he felt tempted to give and receive human affection, he turned to prayer for safety, and thus remained steadfast in his promise to love none but God.

Many years passed away, and Alexis grew weak and emaciated from his long suffering, and God revealed to him that his end was near. So he asked one of the servants of the house to get him a pen and some ink, and he wrote an account of his life, explaining the reason for which he had left his home, and put the letter in his bosom, until the hour when he should die.


About this time, upon a certain festival, Pope Innocent was celebrating High Mass in the presence of the emperor and his court, when a voice was heard to exclaim, "Seek out the holy servant of God who is about to depart this life, and who shall pray for the city of Rome!"

The people fell upon their faces from fear, and another voice spoke, saying, "Where is he to be found?" And the first voice answered, "Seek him in the house of the noble Euphemian." Now Euphemian was close to the emperor, who said to him, "What! hast thou this holy man in thy house, and yet hast kept

it secret? Let us seek him directly." So Euphemian went first to prepare the way for the emperor, and, as he drew near his home, one of the servants came to meet him, saying, "The poor beggar whom thou didst shelter has died within the last hour, and we have laid him upon the steps of the door."

Then Euphemian ran up the steps, and uncovered the beggar's face. Ah! it was like that of an angel now, for a glory of light came from it, and, at the sight, the rich man fell upon his knees, acknowledging that this poor despised creature was one of the chosen friends of the Almighty.

When the Pope, and the emperor, with his court, drew near, they saw the letter in the dead hand of Alexis, and it was opened and read aloud before the whole assembly. No words could describe the feelings of Euphemian when he knew that the beggar was his son—his loved and long-sought Alexis, who had for years dwelt beside him, unknown and uncared for. His mother, and the wife he had



left upon the day of her espousals, rushed out and flung themselves down by the lifeless body, weeping bitterly, and for seven days remained there, refusing to be comforted, while people thronged to touch the sacred remains, and many were cured of their diseases. On the spot where Euphemian's house stood, where Alexis had suffered with resignation and humility so many years, a church was erected, which bears his name, and the marble steps beneath which he died are preserved in a side chapel, where there is a figure of the Saint, in the dress of a pilgrim, with his letter in his hand, and his staff by his side. Thus ended this strange life of separation from all natural ties for the love of God, and, hard and unattractive as it may seem to us who read it, we must remember that it was the path by which he was to reach the reward of heaven, and thus only would he have become sanctified. There are saints who have lived always among their friends, and in their homes, finding it was God's Will which kept them there ;



others have heard, like Alexis, the divine voice commanding them to leave every one, and endure loneliness and desolation; so, in different ways, the cross and the crown have been given to them all—in this world the trials, the persecution, the poverty, the loneliness of the cross; in heaven, the crown of reward, and the “Well done, good and faithful servant,” of the great Master.



## S. John Gualberto.

**T**HE city of Florence was the birthplace of this Saint, who came of a rich and noble lineage. His father stood high in military rank, and brought up his son according to the ideas of the time, and John excelled in all the manly exercises and amusements of the young Florentine noblemen. He had but one brother—Hugo—whom he was exceedingly fond of; and in one of those dreadful quarrels which used to be so common among the young men of that time, this favourite Hugo was killed. The anger of his father, the bitter grief of his mother, increased the resentment of John Gualberto, and he set

off to seek the murderer, vowing to be revenged on him.

One evening—the close of Good Friday—he was returning to his father's country house by a steep and winding road which led from the city gates. His thoughts were not upon the mysteries which had been commemorated by the Church that day, not with the dying Saviour Who forgave His enemies with His last breath,—he was brooding over the sorrow which had overtaken his family, and the longing for revenge was strong as ever, when suddenly, at a turn of the road, he came upon the very man he sought, alone and unarmed.

The young Gualberto drew his sword, for the long-desired opportunity had come at last, and the terrified assassin fell upon his knees begging for mercy. A vindictive light gleamed on the face of John, reflecting the feeling of his heart; mercy was not for one who had murdered Hugo—he raised his sword, but paused as the wretched man extended his arms in the form of a cross, and entreated him

—in memory of the sufferings of Christ, Who had died upon that day—to spare his life. A sudden compunction—God's gift—filled the heart of Gualberto, and trembling from head to foot as he realized the hatred which had so nearly led him to commit this crime, he stayed his sword—it was a moment of fierce conflict between good and evil, but a prayer to the Almighty helped him, and holding out his hand to the trembling suppliant at his feet, he raised him from the ground and granted him forgiveness. They parted, and John Gualberto pursued his way up the hilly road ; but he was sad and sorrowful, and as he reached the church of San Miniato-del-Monte, he went in and knelt down before a crucifix.

Instead of anger and revenge, grief and repentance filled his soul, and he wept bitterly as he bowed low before that image of his crucified Lord ; but raising his eyes to glance at it with a fresh prayer for mercy, it seemed to him that the head of the sacred figure bent towards him. O happy moment!—happy, in

spite of his remorse—for surely Jesus is ready to pardon, ready to take him into His sweet service, and in that moment John Gualberto was a changed man,—the world and its pleasures and honours were nothing to him, and Christ was all he desired.

Going to a Benedictine monastery, he dwelt there some time as an humble penitent; but upon being elected to the post of abbot, he left the place, for no persuasion could induce him to accept an office of which he felt so unworthy, and he sought solitude and suffering, so that all earthly ambition and honour might die within him.

About twenty miles from Florence there was a place called Vallombrosa, where, with two other hermits, he took up his abode in a poor little hut. They led a hard life, and spent hours of the day and night in prayer; but others gathered round, and, discovering his sanctity, wished to stay and follow in his footsteps; and thus a little community was commenced, and increased daily, who looked

to S. Gualberto as their head, and to whom he gave the rule of S. Benedict with the addition of some new obligations.

This holy man was particularly remarkable for his love of simplicity and humility, as well as for many other virtues. Once, when he was visiting one of the houses which were under his rule, and had sprung from that little community which had first joined together to serve God, Gualberto found that the person he had made superior had expended immense sums of money in adorning the monastery with costly marbles and other decorations, and he rebuked him severely, saying that this was a spirit contrary to the simplicity and poverty of a religious. He also foretold that God would surely mark His displeasure by destroying this work of vainglory ; and soon afterwards the mountain torrents overflowed, and a considerable part of the new building was carried away by the force of the water.

One of his monks, named Fiorenzo, was grievously assailed by the evil spirit as he lay

on a bed of sickness, and nothing comforted or helped him until Gualberto came to his side, and holding up his cross and invoking the holy Name, the demon was exorcised and the monk was at peace. Many a time during their life together, these holy men were brought to great extremity, but God gave their superior the miraculous power of multiplying fragments in their need, so that their confidence in Heaven might never waver, nor their prayers be unrewarded.

At length, in the year 1073, S. John Gualberto died, with his monks weeping round his bedside; and as his remains were carried to the grave, the poor, the sick, the blind followed with mourning and lamentation, and many were restored by asking health from God through the Saint's intercession. Twelve houses of the order of S. John Gualberto were founded and approved by the Pope, and in one of their churches at Florence the crucifix is still preserved, before which he knelt and prayed in San Miniato, when his whole nature

was transformed by the grace of God; and the spot upon which he met his brother's murderer has been consecrated by the erection of a cross, where many faithful Catholics have knelt, asking that their contrition for sin may be as deep—their spirit of reparation as sincere—as that which distinguished the whole after-life of this holy, humble servant of God.







## S. Bernard.

**T**HERE was a time when a great evil seemed to be threatening the Church of Christ, when the love of wealth, and ease, and luxury, was beginning to creep into the cloister among the friends and servants of God who had promised to follow Him in meekness and poverty. It was then that the Almighty raised up S. Bernard, whose holy life should have even a stronger and more wide-spread influence in promoting the love of the cross than his sweet persuasive eloquence of speech, who should restore the practice of austerity which had been falling into disuse in so many of the old monasteries.

Bernard was born in the little village of

Fontaine, near Dijon, and he had a most devoted and pious mother, whose heart was turned to God, and who desired nothing for her children but that they should truly love and serve Him. Many holy lessons were taught him in those early days, especially that tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin which distinguished his entire life, and when he was old enough to leave home, he was sent to the college connected with the church of Chatillon to study. From the age of fifteen Bernard practised constant self-denial, and thus avoided many of the sins and follies of the young, for he never forgot that his mother had consecrated him to the service of the Church, and he desired to prepare himself as much as possible for the life of a religious. On one occasion he recollected himself at the very moment when he was gazing upon the beauty of a creature with pleasure, and so horrified was he at finding he could have any other thought than the beauty of his crucified Saviour, that he rushed into a pool of water

which was more than half-frozen, remaining in it until all human feeling was utterly subdued. Soon after Bernard's studies were completed and he returned home, his good mother died at the Castle of Fontaine, to his great grief, and after this event he endured many temptations before he could resolve to become a monk. At length he overcame all the hindrances which the evil spirit suggested to him, and not only conquered himself but won over an uncle and several of his own brothers to devote their lives to God, and so the little company presented themselves before the abbot of a monastery in the forest of Citeaux, and kneeling at his feet, begged to be admitted as novices. This was in the year 1113, and about two years later the abbey became so over-crowded that Bernard was appointed to found another monastery. His abbot chose from the brothers twelve monks representing the twelve apostles, with Bernard for their leader going first, cross in hand, as representing Christ, and thus they left the monastery and heard its doors close

behind them, while they had to wander out into the world trusting in God to direct their steps.

They journeyed on until they reached a wilderness called the Valley of Wormwood, and there, at his bidding, was commenced the since famous Abbey of Clairvaux, and we may picture to ourselves the white-habited monks scattered in that lonely place, felling the trees, building huts to shelter them until their monastery was ready, tilling and sowing the ground until it became a land of vines and corn instead of a wilderness.

In a very few years the name of Bernard of Clairvaux rang through the Christian world as a model of sanctity and austerity, and yet he was sweet, loving, and wise also. Lords appealed to him in differences and disagreements, and he made peace; those ecclesiastics who needed difficult theological questions decided came to Bernard, and were convinced by his judgment,—because he was doing God's work in humble dependence upon divine strength,

he was successful in all his undertakings.

He had sought the life of a monk that he might die to the world and sanctify himself in seclusion, but God's providence forced him into this prominent post that he might save the world he had renounced from many calamities.

Pope Eugenius IV. commanded S. Bernard to preach a second crusade, so that Christians might be roused to fight for the holy places consecrated by the life and death of Christ, and although he was at that time suffering from sickness, he at once prepared to obey.

From town to town he passed in company with two of his monks, preaching to immense multitudes in the churches, working many miracles, exhorting all who could to enroll themselves as the soldiers of Christ. During this journey he entered the Cathedral of Spire in the company of the Emperor Conrad and many nobles, and there, in the presence of all, he approached the altar reciting the beautiful

"*Salve Regina.*" At the words "*O clemens*" he fell upon his knees, then rising, exclaimed, "*O pia,*" and knelt again, and once more, as he uttered, "*O dulcis Virgo Maria,*" he knelt in humble worship of the Blessed Mother of God. In memory of this incident, these words were inscribed upon the pavement where it took place.

After this hymn, the Saint preached a sermon so eloquent and so appealing that it led the emperor himself to ask for the badge of the red cross, and numbers were impelled to start for the wars in Palestine. But the crusade was not successful; of the multitudes who joined it few returned, and, sad to relate, they soon forgot the holy purpose for which they had been gathered together, and great sins prevailed in the camp; the army never reached Jerusalem, and had to retreat with shame and defeat.

It was a great sorrow to S. Bernard to witness the disgrace which the Christians had brought upon themselves, and, besides this, he

had to bear the anger of the people, who were enraged because they deemed him a false prophet, but this feeling soon gave place to sorrow and shame when S. Bernard denounced their sins, and said they had not deserved the protection of Heaven.

The health of this great Saint soon became very feeble, yet he employed himself constantly in writing those homilies and letters which have been prized by the Church in all succeeding ages, and many times visions of his Blessed Mother were granted to console him in suffering and to inspire his pen.

There is a beautiful old story, which tells that once when the holy Abbot of Clairvaux was engaged in study, Mary appeared to him, and as he knelt in loving devotion, she uncovered her bosom and caused a stream of milk to fall upon his lips, so that from that time they should be endowed with such persuasive sweetness that none who heard it could resist his appeals as he spoke of the sufferings of Jesus and the love of His Mother.

While he dwelt at Clairvaux, the sister of S. Bernard, who was the wife of a rich nobleman, came to pay him a visit attended by a large number of servants, but he was so annoyed by this pomp and display, that he refused to see her. Then Humbeline asked for another of her brothers, who was a monk there, but he, following the example of Bernard, refused also. Upon this the lady burst into tears, and, falling on her knees, entreated that the Saint would instruct her as to what was her duty; and at this humble supplication Bernard appeared at a side-gate and told her to return home and imitate her mother. It was a great humiliation for Humbeline, but it did a work in her soul which no long and affectionate interview could have wrought, and she afterwards became as humble and pious as she had before been proud and worldly, and gave herself entirely to God.

The long and austere penances of this holy monk, united with his labours, broke down his health, and after a few years of weakness and



suffering, he died, in the sixty-third year of his age, surrounded by his brethren, at peace with God and man. His anxieties, his labours, were over then, and he was at rest in that "dear, dear country" of his desire, those many mansions of which he sang so sweetly, for the possession of which he had been ready to toil and wait until God stilled the busy pen, [and silenced the eloquent tongue, and called S. Bernard home.





### S. Francis of Sales.

**A**T the Castle of Sales, near Annecy, about three hundred years ago, the holy countess of the noble family who dwelt there was praying fervently to God that the little child which He was soon to give her, might be very good, and that it might die rather than grow up to become His enemy.

Her prayers were heard; for the little boy, Francis, showed, from his earliest infancy, an unusual sweetness of disposition, loving God as soon as he began to know Him. The first words he uttered distinctly were these: "God and my mother love me well." And this realization of the infinite charity of God grew with his

growth, and resulted in that spirit of sweetness and charity to others, for the love of Jesus, which distinguished his character as a man.

The good countess who had prayed so much for the little unborn child, prayed more now as she saw his innocence and holiness, entreating God to keep him pure and unspotted from the world, and she delighted to witness his pleasure in reading holy books, his unwearied happiness when in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and the love to the poor and the self-denial he would practise to assist them. Francis was also a clever child, and apt to learn; and when he began to study at the College of Annecy, he made rapid progress; still this love of learning never interfered with his service of God, and as early as twelve years of age his heart was so fixed upon the hope of becoming a priest, that, with the consent of his father, he received the tonsure.

A few years later, the parents of Francis

sent him to Paris, where he went through a course of theological instruction under the Jesuits, and during this time he acquired that intimate knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures which distinguished him. He still frequented the churches constantly, and was never seen about in the city for amusement—only in going to and from college or church. S. Etienne-des-Grès was the favourite resort, because it was so retired ; and there, before an image of the Blessed Virgin, he made a vow of belonging only to her and her divine Son as long as life should last.

At about sixteen years of age it pleased God to let this Saint be very much tempted to despair of salvation, and this idea made him so unhappy, that he grew quite ill, but could not be persuaded to tell any one the cause of his distress. This miserable thought remained with him a whole month, during which he wept bitterly by night and by day ; but at last the Holy Spirit put it into his heart to go to his favourite church, and, kneeling before

the figure of the Blessed Virgin—where he had made his vow—he begged her to pray that, even if he was so wretched as to be doomed to separation from God for eternity, he might at least love and serve Him all his life on earth. With many tears he recited the “Memorare,” but no sooner had he finished this prayer, than in an instant the temptation of the evil one left him, and his soul was once more filled with peace and joy. No doubt this month of trial and misery was permitted to happen to Francis because God, Who knows all the future, knew that he would in after-years be a great director of souls, and it would guide him in helping any who were greatly tempted, if he had first passed through the same difficulties.

After staying a long time in Paris, his father sent Francis to Padua, and it was there he planned a rule of life for himself, which has been preserved carefully up to the present time, and has been a help to many other young people,—directing them how to arm

themselves against the temptations of the world, by the habit of living in the presence of God. From Padua he went to Rome, and from there to Loretto, where he renewed his vow made under the protection of Mary, and then returned home to the Castle of Sales, where he was received with every mark of joy.

The father of Francis had formed many plans for his son's worldly success, and had obtained for him a post which would have won him much public esteem; but the Saint steadily refused all these offers, and declared his unchanged intention of giving himself to God's service.

Just at first, his father raised difficulties, but they all were cleared away by the hand of God, and Francis was made Provost of the Cathedral at Annecy, where he began to preach with so much fervour that thousands of souls were converted to God. His next mission was to try, by the command of his bishop, to restore the Catholic Faith in that part of the

country, near the Lake of Geneva, which was full of heresy; and here he toiled some years, encountering hatred and persecution—even risking his life among the bitter enemies of Christ, and yet bringing many souls to a knowledge and love of the truth. It was his great gentleness and sweetness of manner which won so many hearts and gained so many victories for God, and we are told that he never left the pulpit without being followed by multitudes of people—some wishing to confess their sins and be reconciled to God, others seeking to be instructed in religious things.

Upon the death of the Bishop of Geneva Francis succeeded him in that dignity, and, in order to prepare himself for his new duties, he made a long retreat, during which he formed a new rule for his future life.

One of the greatest works of S. Francis of Sales was the guidance of S. Jane Frances Chantal, so as to fit her for the place God had assigned to her in this world, as a religious of

the Order of the Visitation, and to lead her up in spiritual things, to the perfection which she attained, and which won her crown in heaven.

When this good bishop first knew Madame de Chantal, she had been suffering much from the loss of her husband, and was sad and troubled; but he soon helped her to seek comfort from God, and her heart found peace and rest, though the brightness of earthly hope and joy was over.

Her little children were very fond of S. Francis, and would run with arms outstretched to meet him, and cluster round his chair, answering his questions and listening to his words. As the girls grew older and showed many little faults of vanity, Francis never failed to rebuke them, but it was always with gentle kindness, which made them reverence him more than ever, and won their confidence entirely.

At one time, Françoise de Chantal seemed



in great danger of becoming engrossed with the world, but the holy bishop begged her to make him one simple promise—to say a “Hail Mary” every day, *with all her heart*; and, because it was his request, she gave her word never to omit this one prayer, and the Blessed Virgin kept her from harm.

S. Francis spent a great deal of time in drawing up the rules for the Order of the Visitation, and in visiting and instructing Mother de Chantal and her nuns, so that many people said, scornfully, that “the Bishop of Geneva wasted time with a few simple women;” but he heard such speeches without being influenced by them, and continued with his usual sweetness to give both care and thought to the guidance of those nuns who were chosen by God for the purpose of establishing an order which has been such a glory and blessing to the whole Catholic world.

Thus the good bishop’s life passed in zealous work for his divine Master; he preached eloquent sermons, he wrote innumerable letters

of sweetness and wisdom to all who needed his counsel, he heard confessions and received those who went to seek help or teaching. But it was not for Francis to live to an advanced age, and in the year 1622 he became seriously ill. He was then in attendance upon the court of Savoy, at Lyons, where, instead of staying in the luxurious apartments prepared for him, he insisted on lodging in a little cottage belonging to the gardener of one of the monasteries of the Visitation.

He preached and performed his usual duties during some days of pain, and then was obliged to take to his bed. In those days, severe remedies were used by surgeons, and hot irons were applied behind his neck, and caustic to his head, which gave him intense suffering; but though the tears were forced from his eyes by the agony he endured, his soul was steadfastly fixed upon God, in complete resignation, and, instead of complaints, none but the holy words of Scripture fell from his lips. Many times he exclaimed, "Wash me, O Lord, from

my iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin ;" for in his humility he believed he deserved these and far worse pains.

After receiving the last Sacraments on the evening of the Feast of the Holy Innocents, S. Francis passed away from earth to heaven, being then not quite fifty-five years old, and he was buried near the high altar in the church of the Visitation convent at Annecy, amidst the tears and lamentations of the people who had known and loved him so truly.

In closing this Life, we must seek to learn the lessons it teaches us. The sweet gentleness and love of S. Francis of Sales, is the thought which always comes with the mention of his name, but we must not suppose it was a purely natural sweetness which required no effort, no struggle against self. The Saint has himself said that he was especially tempted to anger, that he often felt it very hard and difficult to control impatient words and thoughts, but yet he conquered with God's grace, and

the same means of grace are open to each one of us if we will but seek them constantly and use them well. We might all be saints, if we were not so weak, so ungenerous, so sadly unfaithful. We might all conquer our love of ease, our love of pleasure, our vanity, our pride—or whatever may be our special fault and temptation—if we would but strive as those holy servants of God did, if we felt the same mistrust of self and confidence in our dear Lord which kept them safe. But we will not do these things : we tire of the struggle and the self-denial, and thus we remain full of sins and imperfections, which grieve God and hold us back from getting the grace He wants to give us. So, as we close our “*Stories of the Saints*,” we must turn with fresh hope and courage to Him they served, asking for love—that love which will make us press forward on the way to heaven, and count everything worthless which will not lead us there.

“O God, by Whose gracious Will the blessed

Francis, Thy Confessor and Bishop, became all things to all men for the saving of their souls, mercifully grant that, being filled with the sweetness of Thy love, we may, through the guidance of his counsels and by the aid of his merits, attain unto the joys of the life everlasting. Amen.

THE END.

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